LUCINDA WILLIAMS ☆ TOMISLAV GOLUBAN ☆ MIKE SANCHEZ ☆ MUIREANN BRADLEY ☆ RUF RECORDS CELEBRATES 30 YEARS ☆ LAKEWOOD RANCH BLUES FEST

# BLUES MATTERS!

JANUARY 2025 ★ ISSUE 145

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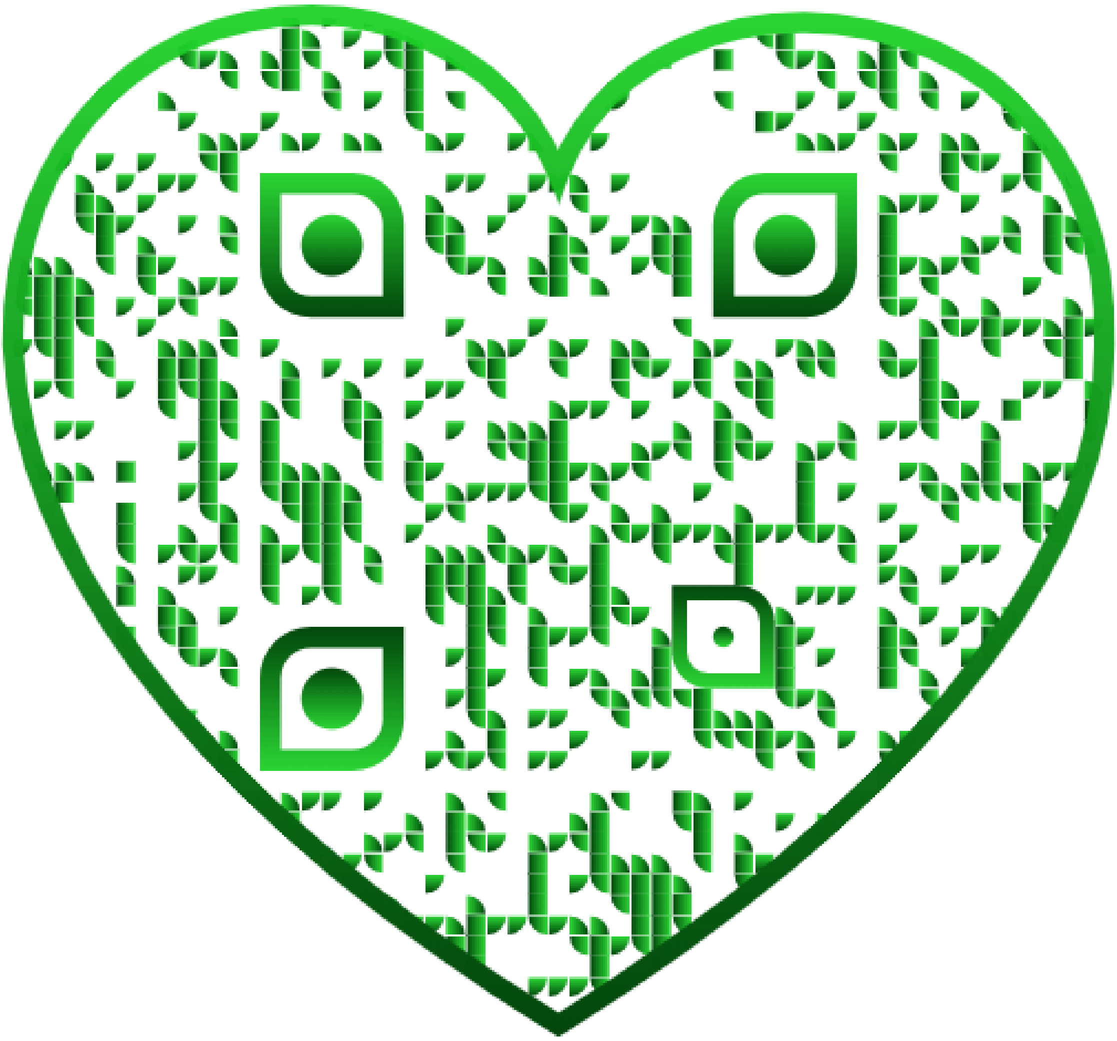
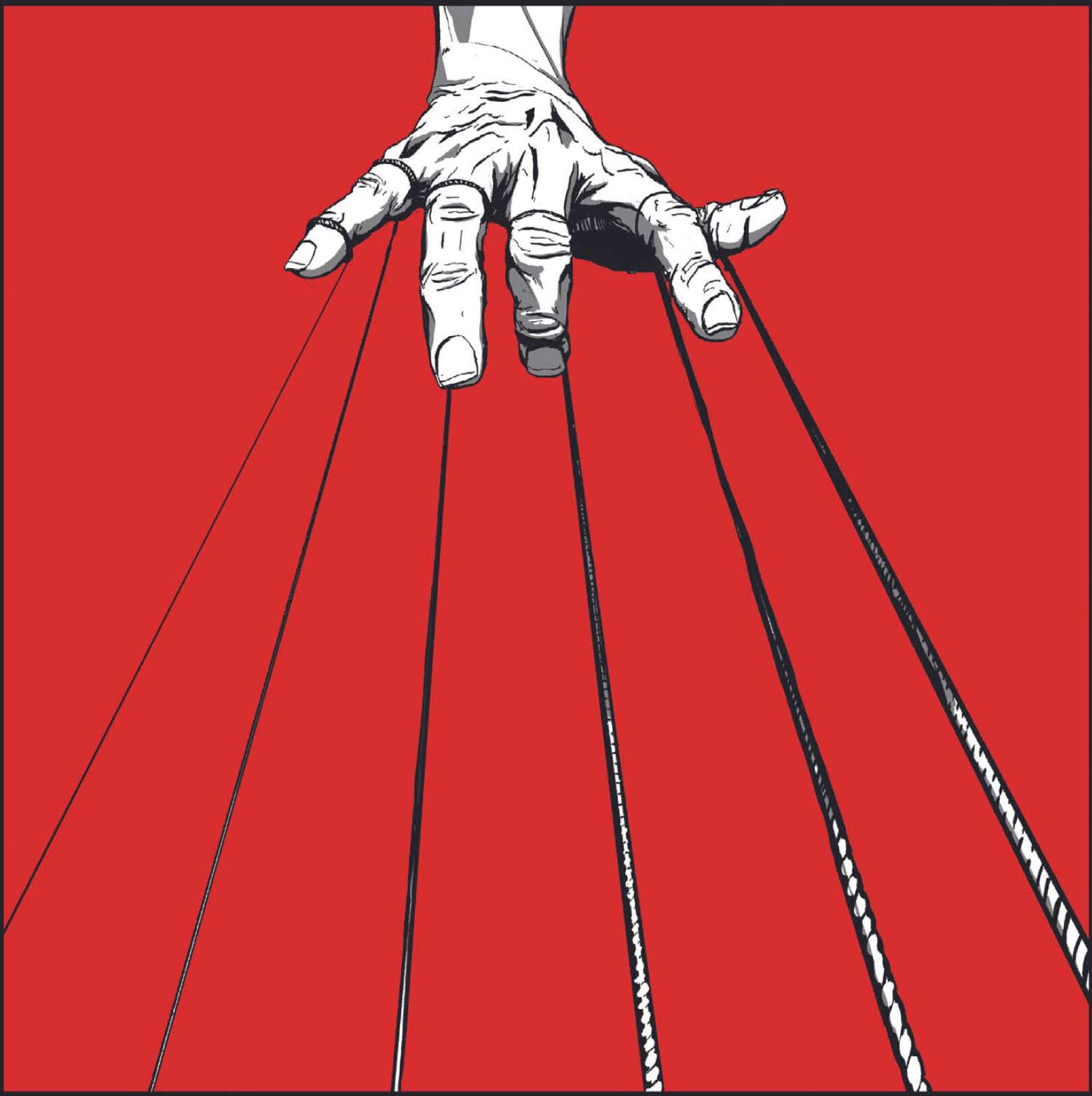


# STEVE HILL



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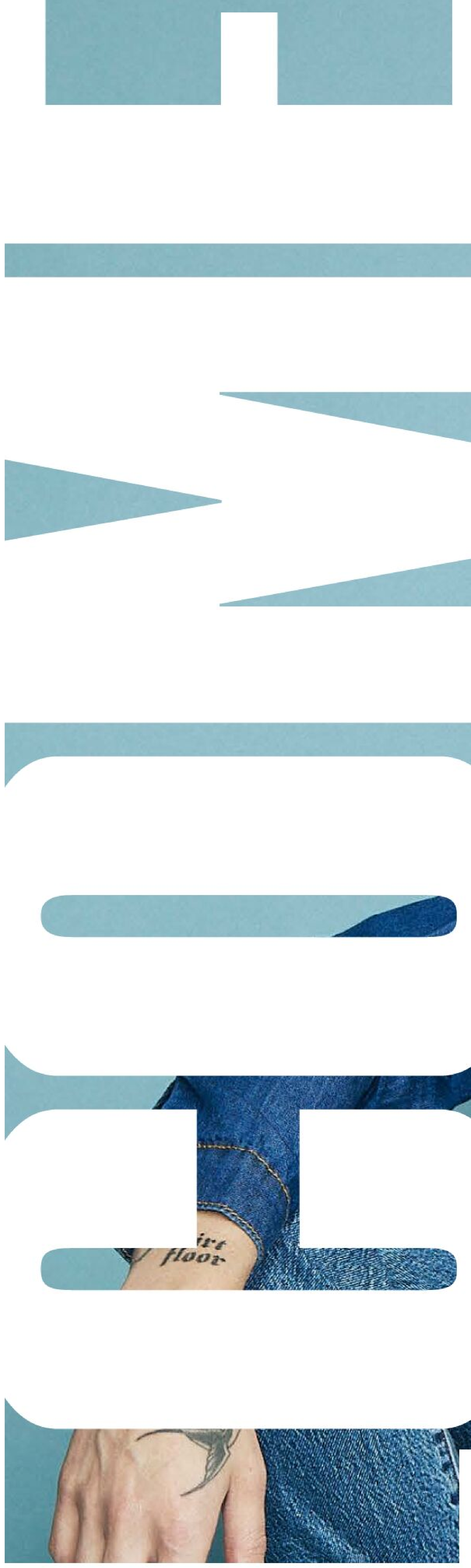

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30 YEARS OF RUF RECORDS

LIVE REVIEW: BETH HART

MUIREANN BRADLEY

MIKE SANCHEZ

LAKEWOOD RANCH BLUES FESTIVAL

LUCINDA WILLIAMS

TOMISLAV GOLUBAN

LARKIN POE

# RUF RECORDS CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF BLUES EXCELLENCE WITH STAR-STUDDED ANNIVERSARY TOUR

Stephen Harrison   Arnie Goodman

For three incredible decades, RUF Records has been a driving force in the blues music industry, bringing legendary talent and electrifying performances to fans around the world. To mark this momentous occasion, RUF Records hosted a 12-date 30th Anniversary Tour across the U.S. in November 2024, featuring an extraordinary lineup of blues icons and rising stars.

## THE LINEUP: A BLUES LOVER'S DREAM

From November 7th to November 24th, the tour swept through states including Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Virginia, Washington D.C., New York, and Massachusetts, showcasing the best of RUF Records' talent past and present. The lineup was nothing short of spectacular, headlined by:

- **Samantha Fish** – Known for her fiery guitar skills and soulful voice, Samantha lit up the stage as the night's headliner.
- **Canned Heat** – The legendary band brought their classic blues-rock grooves to life, joined by a special guest appearance from the incomparable Bernard Allison.
- **Mitch Ryder** – A rock and blues powerhouse who delivered unforgettable jams alongside Samantha Fish.
- **Ghalia Volt** – The one-woman band dazzled audiences, opening each night with her unique blend of raw energy and virtuosity.

## AN UNFORGETTABLE SHOW

Each stop on the tour featured a four-hour anniversary celebration that embodied the rich history and spirit of RUF Records. The evening began with an electrifying performance by Ghalia Volt, whose multi-instrumental talents and captivating stage presence set the tone for an unforgettable night.

Next up, Canned Heat delivered a powerhouse set, weaving in their signature classics and thrilling the crowd with a special jam session featuring Bernard Allison, the son of blues legend Luther Allison. Fans were treated to a once-in-a-lifetime moment as these blues icons created pure magic on stage.

Finally, Samantha Fish took the reins, closing the show with her unparalleled blend of technical prowess and emotional depth. To top it off, Samantha invited Mitch Ryder to join her for two unforgettable songs, leaving the audience in awe of their dynamic chemistry.

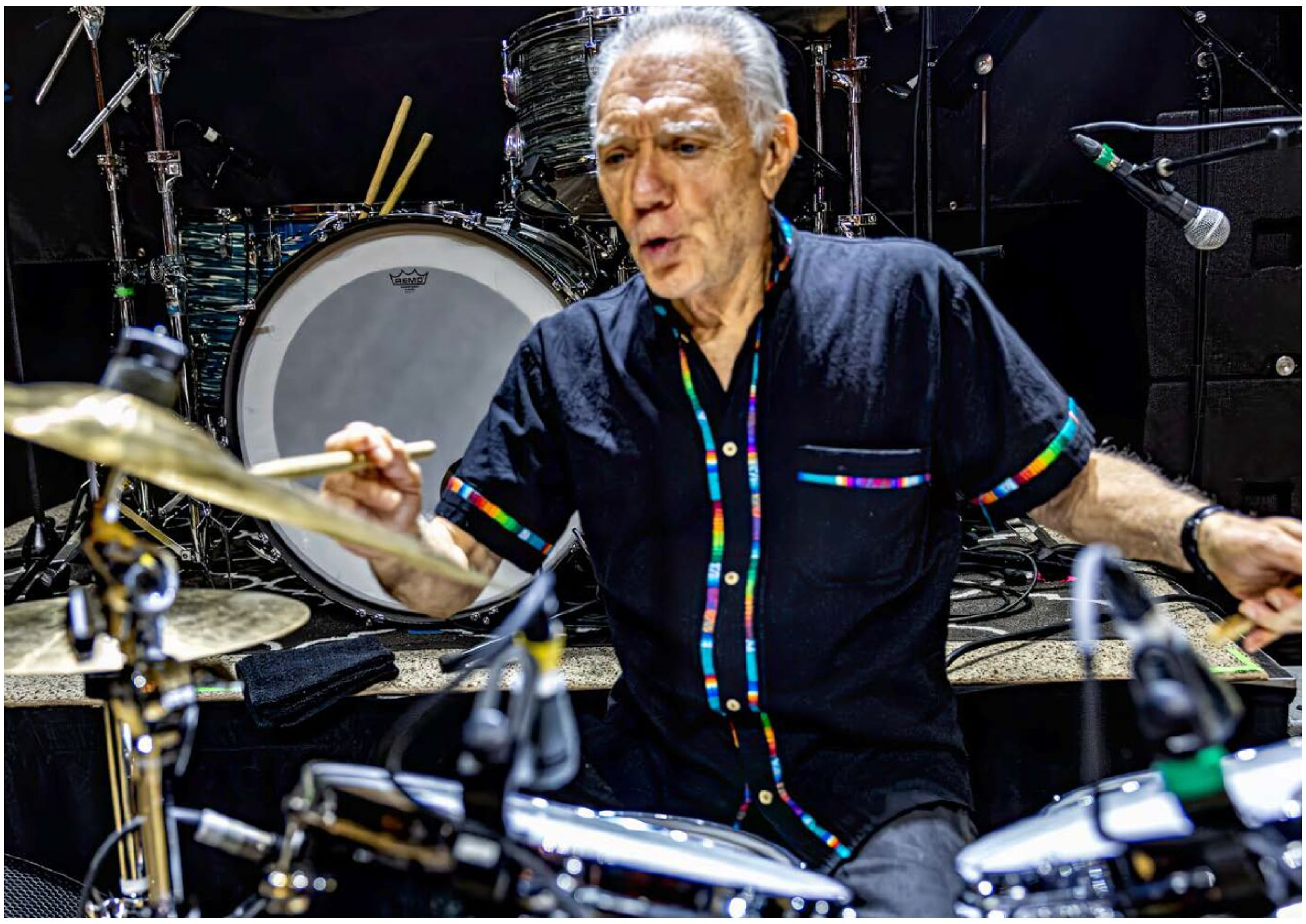
## THREE DECADES OF BLUES LEGACY

Over its 30-year history, RUF Records has been home to countless legendary artists and has played a pivotal role in preserving and advancing the blues genre. This anniversary tour was more than a celebration—it was a testament to the enduring power of blues music and its ability to connect generations of fans and musicians alike. RUF Records founder Thomas Ruf reflected on the milestone, stating, "This tour was about honoring our roots, celebrating our incredible artists, and sharing the joy of blues music with fans who have supported us every step of the way."

## A CELEBRATION TO REMEMBER

The 30th Anniversary Tour was not just a concert series—it was a tribute to the artists, fans, and music that have kept the blues alive for three decades. As the final encore played and the last notes echoed into the night, one thing was clear: RUF Records' legacy is stronger than ever, and the future of blues is in very good hands.
For those who missed it, the memories will live on in the stories shared by fans lucky enough to witness this historic celebration of blues excellence.

CANNED HEAT
FINYL VINYL
CHESS
RECORD CORP.



# LIVE REVIEW BETH HART BRIGHTON DOME, NOVEMBER 30, 2024

Iain Patience    Cris Watkins and Louise Phillips

Beth Hart simply grows in stature with each passing year, not to say gig. Hitting the stage at another sold-out UK gig in Brighton, she replicated her last visit in 2023, with a hugely excited full-house crowd and her usual sashaying vibe.

Having seen Hart many times over the years in both Europe, UK and USA, I pretty well knew what to expect, as did most of the Brighton crowd. Hart made her appearance, drifting joyously down the aisle towards the stage, accompanied by her husband, Scot as chaperone. Reaching out to bump fists or shake hands with her faithful, she then took to the stage and the show truly began. Featuring material from across her career, she debuted much of her latest release, 'You Still Got Me' here and the crowd lapped it up, as usual!

Hart is nothing if not a consummate actress/actor. She positively commands the stage with her constant, prowling and growling restlessness, one minute sitting there, feet dangling over the stage-end, then whirling around, draping herself over band members and roaring into her mic with raw passion and power. As usual, she was backed by her normal support outfit, a band that knows exactly what they're doing and does it in absolute style with swagger and pizzaz.

As Hart ripped through the show, the crowd cheered her on and her inevitable encore left the crowd still baying for yet more. It is coming, but not until early 2025, when she will again grace the stages of the UK with her usual class and velocity. The most interesting new track, for me, was 'Wanna Be Big Bad Johnny Cash'!

Hart as a writer and performer knows exactly what she is doing and her songs are often deeply personal memories put to music, revealing, raw and emotional. Maybe, something worth waiting for…again!

I WILL TEAR YOUR SOUL APART!

*“Hart made her appearance, drifting joyously down the aisle towards the stage”*

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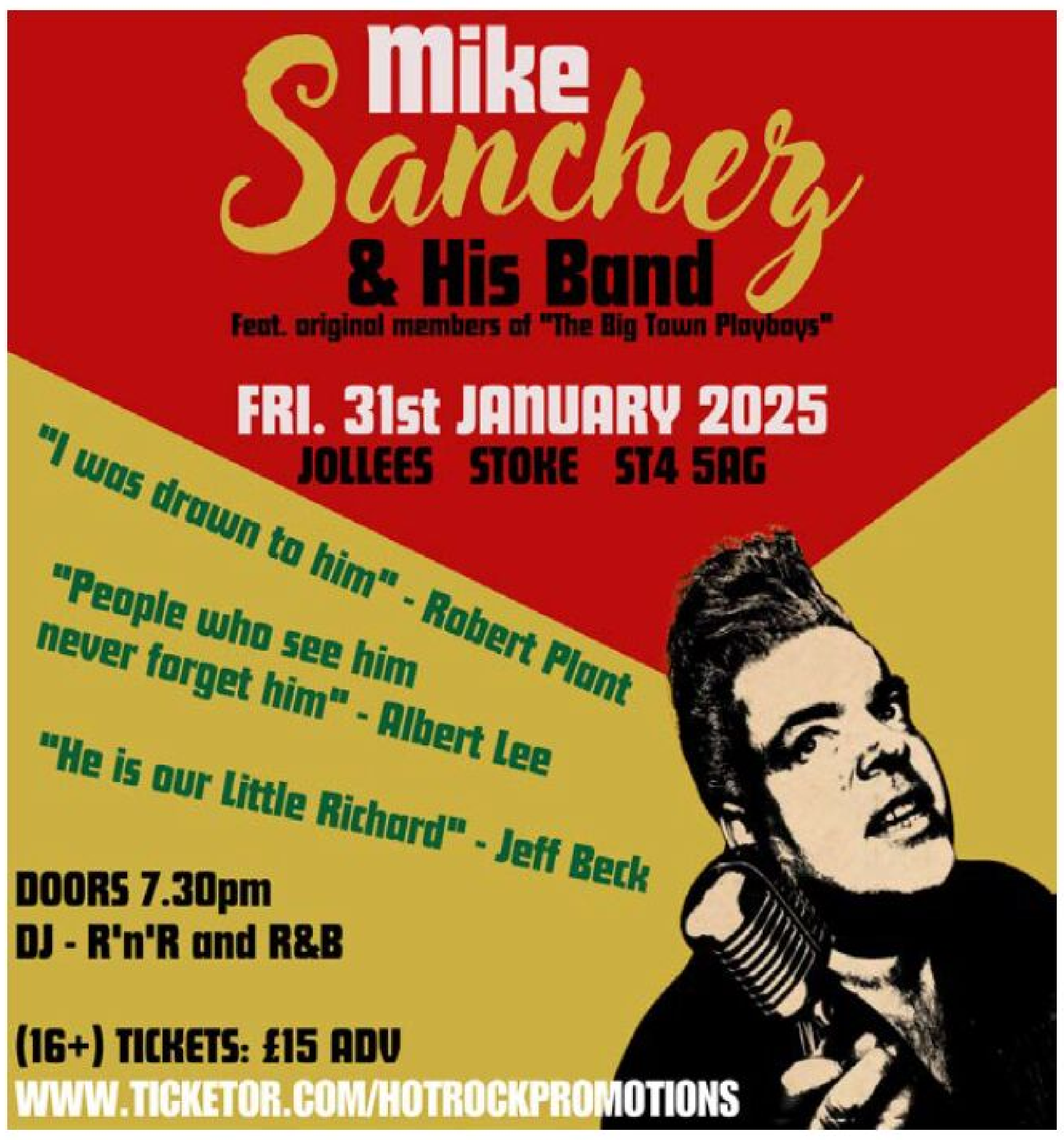

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4 APRIL LIVERPOOL • O2 Academy2
5 APRIL NEWCASTLE • The Think Tank
6 APRIL EDINBURGH • The Mash House
7 APRIL GLASGOW • Nice'N Sleazy
8 APRIL SHEFFIELD • The Greystones
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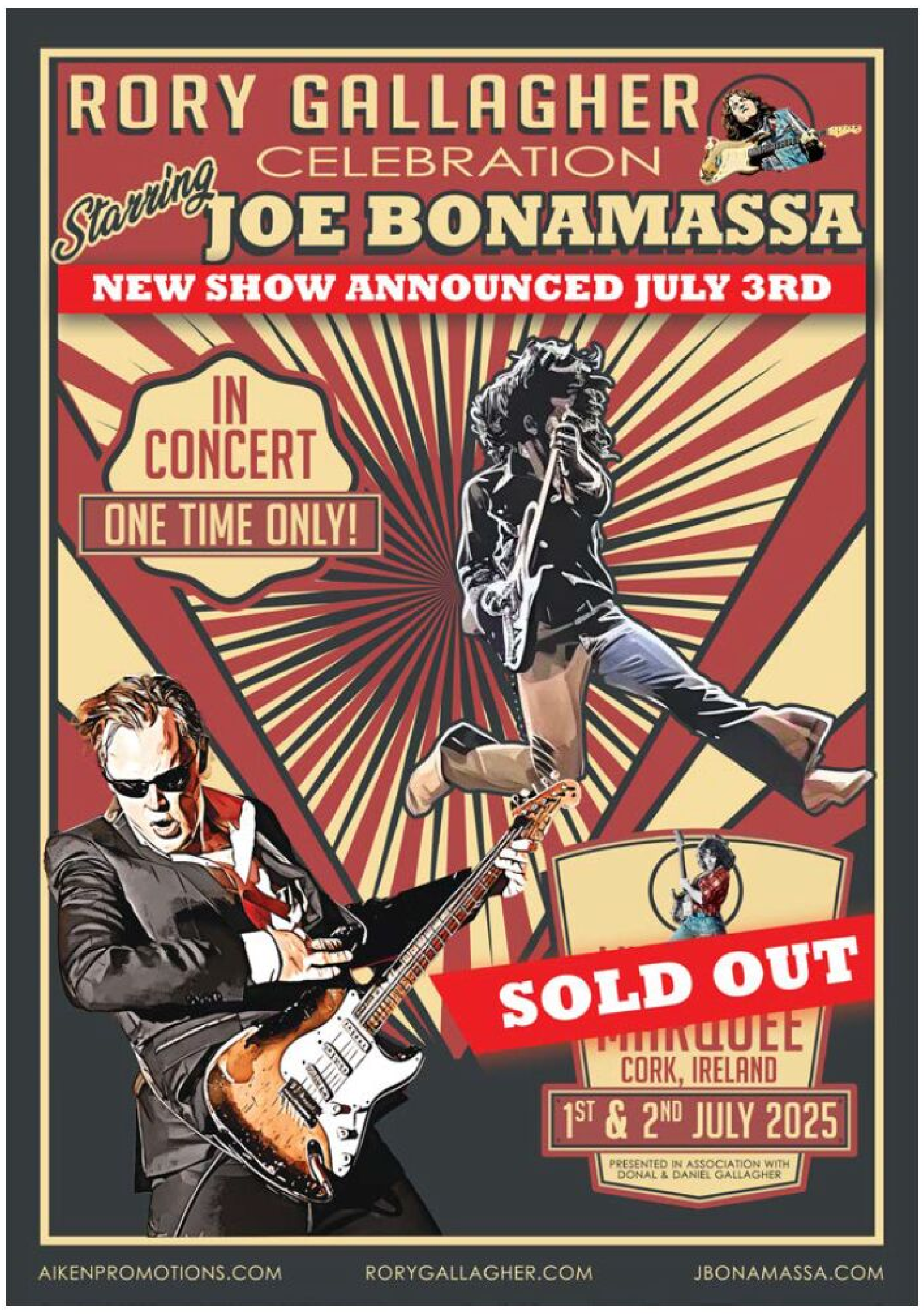

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30/01 - Bootleggers, Kendal
31/01 - Music & Arts Centre, Barnoldswick
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07/02 - Borders Blues Club, Edinburgh
11/02 - 100 Club, London
Elmore Magazine USA: "A truly exceptional and masterfully melodic offering" ★★★★

# THE **BIG BLUES** CHART

## THE TOP 50 BLUES ALBUMS

| POS | ARTIST | ALBUM | LABEL |
|---|---|---|---|
| #1 | RONNIE BAKER BROOKS | BLUES IN MY DNA | ALLIGATOR RECORDS |
| #2 | SHEMEKIA COPELAND | BLAME IT ON EVE | ALLIGATOR RECORDS |
| #3 | JOVIN WEBB | DRIFTER | BLIND PIG |
| #4 | BENNY TURNER | BT | NOLA BLUE RECORDS |
| #5 | THE ANTHONY PAULE SOUL ORCHESTRA | WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? | BLUE DOT RECORDS |
| #6 | VANESSA COLLIER | DO IT MY OWN WAY | PHENIX FIRE RECORDS |
| #7 | MITCH WOODS | HAPPY HOUR | MOMOJO RECORDS |
| #8 | KAT RIGGINS & HER BLUES REVIVAL | REVIVAL | HOUSE OF BERRY PRODUCTIONS |
| #9 | OLLEE OWENS | NOWHERE TO HIDE | S/R |
| #10 | KENNY "BLUES BOSS" WAYNE | OOH YEAH! | STONY PLAIN |
| #11 | DUKE ROBILLARD | ROLL WITH ME | STONY PLAIN |
| #12 | MISSISSIPPI MACDONALD | I GOT WHAT YOU NEED | APM RECORDS |
| #13 | TAB BENOIT | I HEAR THUNDER | WHISKEY BAYOU RECORDS |
| #14 | ERIC BIBB | IN THE REAL WORLD | STONY PLAIN |
| #15 | CHRIS CAIN | GOOD INTENTIONS | GONE BAD ALLIGATOR |
| #16 | VANEESE THOMAS | STORIES IN BLUE | OVERTON MUSIC |
| #17 | SONNY GULLAGE | GO BE FREE | BLIND PIG |
| #18 | ALBERT CASTIGLIA | RIGHTEOUS SOULS | GULF COAST RECORDS |
| #19 | COLIN JAMES | CHASING THE SUN | STONY PLAIN |
| #20 | CHAD RUPP AND THE SUGAR ROOTS | GATE C23 | LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE RECORDS |
| #21 | JAKE SHIMABUKURO AND MICK FLEETWD | BLUES EXPERIENCE | FORTY BELOW RECORDS |
| #22 | SUGAR BROWN | TORONTO BOUND | S/R |
| #23 | GREG NAGY | THE REAL YOU | S/R |
| #24 | MIKEY JUNIOR | TRAVELING NORTH | 8TH TRAIN RECORDS |
| #25 | BRUCE KATZ BAND | BACK IN BOSTON LIVE | DANCING ROOSTER RECORDS |
| #26 | JONTAVIOUS WILLIS | WEST GEORGIA BLUES | STROLLING BONES RECORDS |
| #27 | DENNIS HERRERA | FOUR | DEEP GROOVE RECORDS |
| #28 | TAS CRU BAND | LIVE: ALL NATURAL CAGE-FREE | SUBCAT |
| #29 | MARK HUMMEL | TRUE BELIEVER | ROCKINITIS RECORDS |
| #30 | CW AYON | BOUNCE BOOGIE & BUMP | S/R |
| #31 | EDDIE 9V | SARATOGA | RUF RECORDS |
| #32 | JIMMY CARPENTER | JUST GOT STARTED | GULF COAST RECORDS |
| #33 | JERRON PAXTON | THINGS DONE CHANGED | SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS |
| #34 | TORONZO CANNON | SHUT UP & PLAY | ALLIGATOR |
| #35 | ZAC HARMON | FLOREADA'S BOY | CATFOOD RECORDS |
| #36 | THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS | STRUCK DOWN | STONY PLAIN RECORDS |
| #37 | FRANK CATALANO | LURRIE BELL | SET ME FREE CATALANO MUSIC |
| #38 | JD SIMO & LUTHER DICKINSON | DO THE RUMP! | FORTY BELOW RECORDS |
| #39 | CHICAGO BLUES LIFTERS BLUES | SCOUTS | HITSKOPE RECORDS |
| #40 | FREEWORLD | MORE LOVE | SWIRLDISC |
| #41 | PIPER AND THE HARD TIMES | REVELATION | HARD TIMES RECORDS |
| #42 | BETH HART | YOU STILL GOT ME | PROVOGUE MASCOT LABEL GROUP |
| #43 | THE BLUESBONES | LIVE ON TOUR | NAKED RECORDS |
| #44 | SUE FOLEY | ONE GUITAR WOMAN | STONY PLAIN |
| #45 | IAN SIEGAL MEETS JOHNNY MASTRO | EASY TIGER | CONTINENTAL BLUE HEAVEN. |
| #46 | TRAVIS BOWLIN | HOOKS & GROOVES | MOONBEAM RECORDS |
| #47 | WALK THAT WALK | RED DEVIL LYE | S/R |
| #48 | KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD | DIRT ON MY DIAMONDS VOLUME 2 | PROVOGUE |
| #49 | CURTIS SALGADO | FINE BY ME | LITTLE VILLAGE |
| #50 | GUY DAVIS | THE LEGEND OF SUGARBELLY | M.C. RECORDS |

# A FRESH TAKE
## ON OLD BLUES

## MUIREANN BRADLEY

Waterloo

“I wanted to keep that authentic, raw feeling alive with first or second takes.”

**Muireann Bradley may be young, but she's quickly becoming a name to watch in the world of acoustic blues. Hailing from County Donegal, Ireland, Muireann's journey into blues music is as unique as it is inspiring. At just 16 years old, she released her debut album, I Kept the Blues, which she started recording during lockdown, at the age of fourteen.**

Stephen Harrison Ethan Porter & Carsten

A collection of acoustic tracks steeped in the rich traditions of early 20th-century blues legends like Reverend Gary Davis and Mississippi John Hurt. Speaking with Stephen Harrison, she opened up about her musical upbringing, influences, and what it's like to perform on one of the world's biggest stages.

## A MUSICAL UPBRINGING

Growing up in rural Donegal, Muireann's love for the blues was nurtured by her father, an avid collector of old Gibson guitars and an enthusiast of classic blues records. "I grew up listening to blues and ragtime music," she shared. "My dad was always playing Reverend Gary Davis, Mississippi John Hurt, and other greats around the house. He also taught me to play guitar, though he wouldn't let me touch his prized antique Gibsons," she laughed.

One guitar, in particular, caught Muireann's eye. "He had an old Kalamazoo, the same model Robert Johnson used. I wasn't allowed to play it, but I loved looking at it. It's a guitar I'll always remember." Her father's passion for blues music and storytelling planted the seeds for what would become her own career in music.

## DISCOVERING THE BLUES

Muireann's fascination with the genre deepened as she delved into the history of blues music and its pioneers. "I have strong memories of hearing Reverend Gary Davis's Candy Man growing up. That song really stuck with me, and it's one I perform today." She explained how her father's stories about blues legends, combined with her own curiosity, fuelled her appreciation for the genre's rich history.

Recording I Kept the Blues was a journey in itself. Starting at the age of 14, Muireann wanted the album to capture the authenticity of the 1920s and 1930s blues recordings she admired. "I tried to use the first or second take for each track, just like they did back then. It felt like the right way to honour the music and the artists who inspired me."

## AN UNCONVENTIONAL PATH

Muireann's dedication to preserving the authenticity of acoustic blues stands out in today's music scene. While many artists explore electric blues or full band arrangements, she remains committed to her acoustic roots. "For now, I'm sticking to acoustic blues. I've never really played an electric guitar, and I've never performed with a band. It's something I might try in the future, but right now, I'm focused on the music I love."

Her admiration for blues legends like Memphis Minnie is evident. "Memphis Minnie's playing and character are amazing," Muireann said. "There's this funny story about her winning a cotton heads contest against Big Bill Broonzy. She was carried around by the audience while Big Bill drank her prize—a bottle of whiskey." Such tales highlight the colourful personalities of blues legends and add to their enduring legacy.

**“Reverend Gary Davis is one of my main influences - his music is incredible”**

## FROM DONEGAL TO JOOLS HOLLAND

Muireann's big break came when her album caught the attention of the producer of Jools Holland's Hootenanny. "My dad suggested sending the album to people at the BBC. It turned out that Alison Howe, the show's producer, had already bought my album! She invited me to perform on the show, and it was an incredible experience."

Performing on Hootenanny alongside stars like Rod Stewart, Ruby Turner, and Jools Holland himself was surreal for the young artist. "Ruby Turner was so lovely. She took me under her wing and made me feel like I belonged there. It was an amazing experience I'll never forget."

## TOURING AND LOOKING AHEAD

Since releasing her album, Muireann has been busy touring. "I recently finished a UK tour, starting in Glasgow and ending in Brighton. It was an amazing experience," she said. In addition to her solo gigs, she has exciting plans for 2025, including supporting Eric Bibb and joining the lineup for Joe Bonamassa's Keeping the Blues Alive at Sea cruise. "I'm really looking forward to seeing artists like Matt Myers and, of course, Joe Bonamassa himself. It's going to be an incredible experience."

## THE EVOLUTION OF A BLUES ARTIST

Muireann is already thinking about her next album, which will feature a mix of traditional blues covers and original songs. "I'm just beginning to write my own songs," she shared. "It's a new challenge, but I'm excited to include some originals on the next record."

When asked if there's anyone she'd love to perform with, her answer reflected her deep appreciation for blues history. "If I could play with anyone, alive or dead, it would be Reverend Gary Davis. He's one of my biggest influences. For someone alive, I'd say Roy Book Binder, who learned directly from Davis. It would be amazing to play with someone who carries that legacy."

## BLUES BEYOND THE ALBUM

While her debut album is a testament to her talent, Muireann's live performances offer something extra. "I often play songs that aren't on the album," she said. Her setlist includes tracks like When the Levee Breaks and Black Horse Blues, as well as non-blues songs like Bob Dylan's Don't Think Twice, It's All Right and Hank Williams' I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry. "I love mixing it up and playing songs that resonate with me."

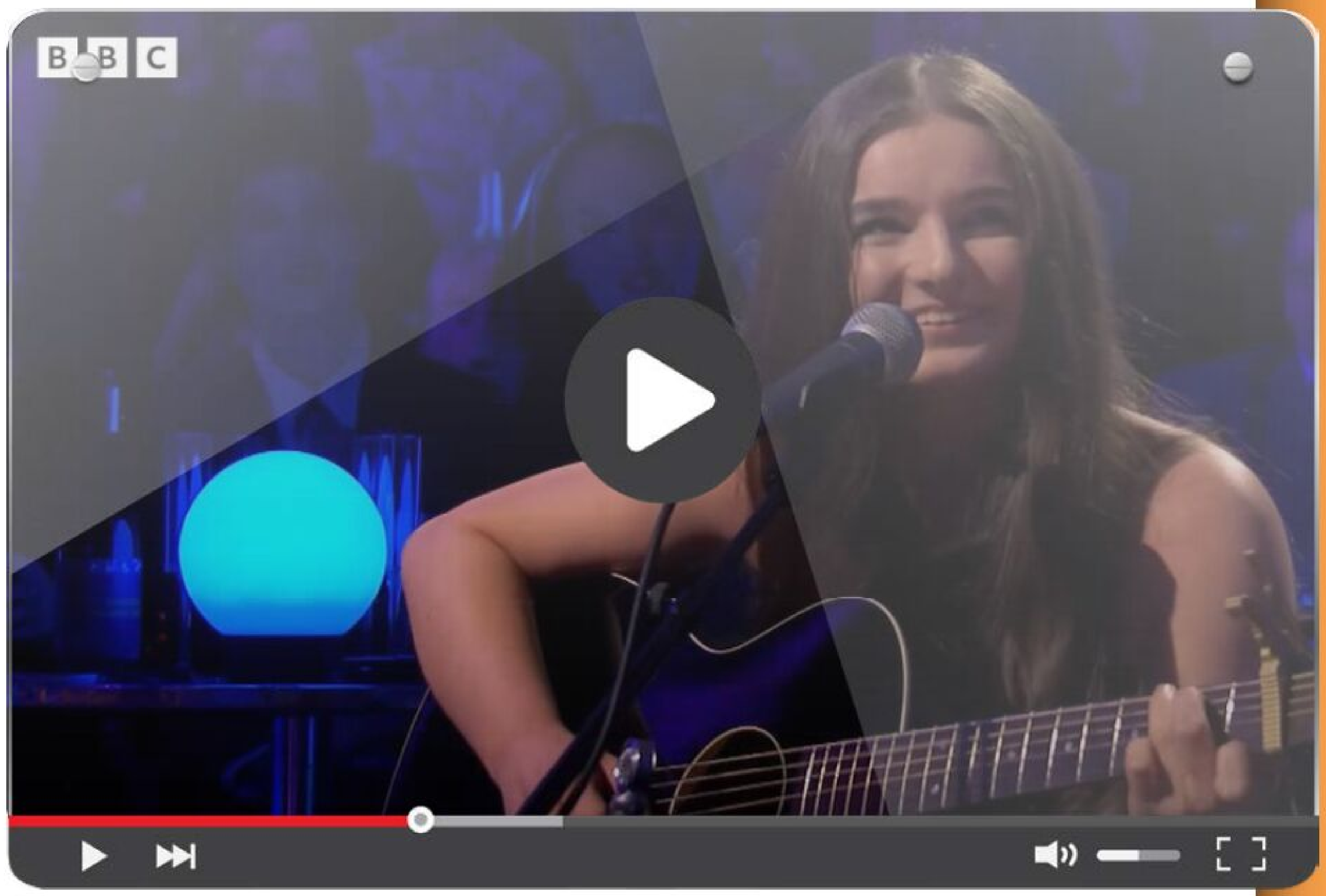
## A BRIGHT FUTURE

At just 17, Muireann Bradley's passion for the blues and commitment to its traditions are undeniable. Her journey from playing guitars in her father's house to performing on Jools Holland's Hootenanny and touring internationally is a testament to her talent and dedication. With plans for new music and exciting opportunities on the horizon, she is poised to make an even bigger impact in the world of blues.

## KEEPING THE BLUES ALIVE

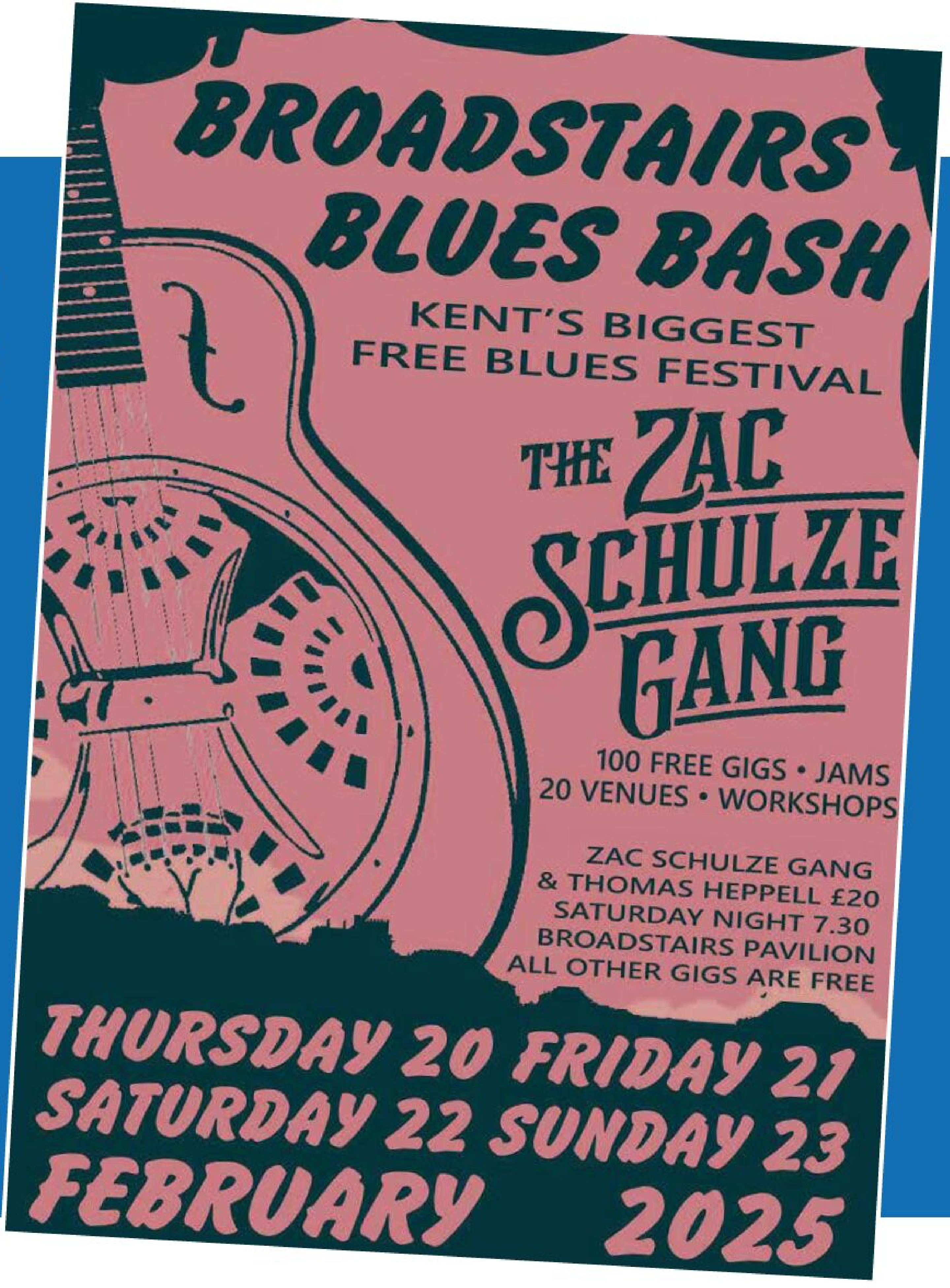
As Stephen Harrison concluded his interview, he reflected on Muireann's potential to inspire a new generation of blues fans. Her ability to honour the past while carving her own path is what makes her stand out. For Muireann, it's about more than just music. "The blues is about connection and storytelling," she said. "If my music resonates with someone, that's the greatest reward."

Muireann Bradley is not just a young talent; she is a torchbearer for the rich tradition of country blues. Her dedication to authenticity, her reverence for the genre's history, and her fresh perspective make her a standout artist. With exciting projects and performances on the horizon, including a tour of Australia and a spot on Joe Bonamassa's Keeping the Blues Alive at Sea cruise, the future looks incredibly bright for this Donegal native. To learn more about Muireann and her music, visit her official website at muireannbradley.ie.



# BROADSTAIRS BLUES BASH 2025

## *A MUST-VISIT EVENT FOR MUSIC LOVERS*



Get ready to experience the soulful sounds of the blues as the Broadstairs Blues Bash returns for its 17th year! From Thursday, 20th February to Sunday, 23rd February 2025, the picturesque seaside town of Broadstairs in Kent will transform into a vibrant hub of live music, welcoming fans from near and far to indulge in a weekend of unforgettable performances.

### A Celebration of Blues Music

The Broadstairs Blues Bash has cemented its reputation as one of the UK's premier blues festivals. Featuring a mix of traditional and contemporary styles, the event showcases top-tier talent across a variety of intimate venues scattered throughout the town. Best of all, most of the performances are free, ensuring accessibility for all blues enthusiasts. Whether you're a lifelong fan or a newcomer to the genre, this festival promises something for everyone.

### Headline Acts and Special Events

While the festival's hallmark is its free gigs, certain highlight events are ticketed and well worth the price. The Saturday night performance at the Pavilion is always a standout, and tickets for this year's headliner, the Zac Schulze Gang, are already selling fast. Don't miss your chance to secure a spot at this electrifying show.

### A Line-Up Packed with Talent

Spread over four days, the 2025 Broadstairs Blues Bash will feature an impressive roster of artists. From local heroes to national names, acts such as the John Doe Trio, Starfire 98, Steve Paterson, Alligator Cats, and Barefoot Doctors are set to take the stage. With over 30 performances across a variety of pubs, wine bars, and larger venues like the Pavilion, the festival offers an intimate yet eclectic experience that truly celebrates the blues.

### Supporting the Festival

The Broadstairs Blues Bash is a community-driven event that relies on the support of its attendees. Purchasing official merchandise such as programmes, badges, and T-shirts helps to keep the majority of the gigs free and ensures the festival's sustainability. So, why not pick up a memento while supporting a great cause?

### Plan Your Visit

Broadstairs' charming coastal location, nestled on the eastern tip of Kent, makes it an ideal getaway. The town is easily accessible via road and rail from London, and once you're there, all venues are within walking distance. For those planning to stay overnight, there are plenty of accommodation options still available, including Broadstairs Apartments, Beeches Holiday Lets, Fishermen's Cottages, Devonhurst Hotel, and Baytree Broadstairs.

### Don't Miss Out

With its unique blend of world-class music, warm community spirit, and stunning seaside setting, the Broadstairs Blues Bash is more than just a festival — it's a celebration of the blues in all its forms. Whether you're there to discover new talent, revel in classic tunes, or simply soak up the atmosphere, this event is a must-visit for any music lover.

Mark your calendars for 20th to 23rd February 2025 and prepare to immerse yourself in the magic of the blues. For more information, updates, and tickets, visit the official festival website: www.broadstairsbluesbash.com.

HERE
FOR
THE
BLUES

# BROADSTAIRS BLUES BASH 2025

## KENT'S BIGGEST FREE BLUES FESTIVAL

THURSDAY 20TH TO SUNDAY 23RD FEBRUARY 2025

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*BLUE BISHOPS*BLUES BOY KINGS*BRETT MARVIN & THE THUNDERBOLTS*CHRIS LORD & HER BLUES EXPRESS*
*CONSUMMATE ROGUES*DAVE FERRA*DEEP RIVER*DELTA BLUE*DIRTY RUBY*ERIC RANZONI*FAT TUESDAY*
*FRAN MCGILLIVRAY & MIKE BURKE*GET CARTER*GROCER JACK*GROOVE RATS*HOWLIN' MAT*HUGE HENRY*HULLABALOO*
*JACK AUSTIN DESPY*JACKALS*JAMIE WILLIAMS & THE ROOTS COLLECTIVE*JEFF BARKER'S ZOOTZ*JFK*
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*MARCUS BONFANTI & ROSCO WILSON*MASTER BLUES BAND*MATT WITHEY'S BLUES MESS*MIGHTY FINE MR FEIST*
*MILES COOKMAN BAND*MISTER 44*NATIVE OYSTERS BAND*PHIL THORNE*RICHARD ROZZE*RICHARD TOWNEND*
*RICHIE TRIANGLE*ROADHOUSE*ROBIN BIBI*ROGER HUBBARD*RICHARD STUDHOLME*SHARPEES*
*SOUTHERN SLAMDOOR BAND*SPICE CHAVS*SPLIT WHISKERS*SQUEEZE GUT ALLEY*STARFIRE 98*STEALER*
*STEEL GOIN' STRONG-BEN BOUMAN*STEVE PATERSON*STEVE WHALLEY*STORMY-T & BLUESMAN'S LANE*T251S*
*THANET GOSPEL CHOIR*THE BLUES DUO*THE FEELGOOD BAND*THE JIVES*THE JOHNNY DOGS*THE PAUL COOK BLUES BAND*
*THE SCOUNDRELS*THE SUPERMICKS*THE TESTIMONY*THOMAS HEPPEL*TREVOR BABAJACK STEGER*TRUE STRAYS*
*VENUS WITCH BLUES BAND*VOODOO VENDORS*WASHED UP JUG BAND*ZAC SCHULZE GANG*ZOE SCHWARZ & ROB KORAL*

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# MIKE SANCHEZ

# THE ORIGINAL PLAYBOY

**Mike Sanchez is a powerhouse performer. Known for his extraordinary stage presence where he takes over the stage with barrel-house, boogie-Woogie keys playing and commanding vocals, for around 40 years he has been in the eye of the musical storm.**

✎ Iain Patience 📷 Cherrymuffin

The accolades have poured in from many of absolute giants of modern R&B, Blues and Rock'n Roll. A taste of the comments and the variety of artists is enough to whet most music-lovers' appetites.

*'Mike Sanchez would have invented rock 'n' roll if no one else had bothered'* - Mark Lamarr

*'He is our Little Richard, with a bit of Jerry Lee Lewis thrown in'* - Jeff Beck

*'People who see him never forget him'* - Albert Lee

*'What other people were doing in the studio, he did on the stage, and he did it fantastically well'* - Bill Wyman

*'Mike has got that natural talent. Like John McEnroe at tennis or David Beckham at football, Mike has that on piano'* - Andy Fairweather-Low

*'He's a great singer, musician and songwriter, and a brilliant entertainer'* - Imelda May

The list continues in similar vein. Indeed, speaking with Mike, now based in Spain, he laughs and says: "Bill Wyman calls me 'the slug', cause when I come off-stage I leave a trail of sweat! My shirts are soaked every time!"

Sanchez is seldom seen playing in the UK these days. He explains this simply: "I don't tour anymore. I've done with that, staying in hotels, a different place every night, travelling in vans. I've done that for forty years. Now I look for maybe four well-paying gigs a month. That suits me better."

Interestingly, there is a rare opportunity to catch the guy play live – a memorable experience – in the UK coming very soon. Sanchez is doing a one-nighter at Stoke on Trent, playing Jollees in the town on January 31st.

Having seen this guy play on a number of occasions, I personally know he is a musical whirlwind, commanding a stage with an astonishing vibrant personality and total mastery. On this gig, Sanchez will be joined by old mates, members of the Big Town Playboys, a band he fronted for many years and includes an old schoolmate of his, Ian Jennings on bass – a man who is also a member of Andy Fairweather Low's Low Riders. (Indeed, Andy was also guitarist with the Playboys for a few years.)

When I ask what took him into music, Sanchez laughs and recalls his life as a kid in north London. With Spanish parents, the family moved to Bewdley, Worcestershire when he was a youngster. There, he explains, the music started in reality:

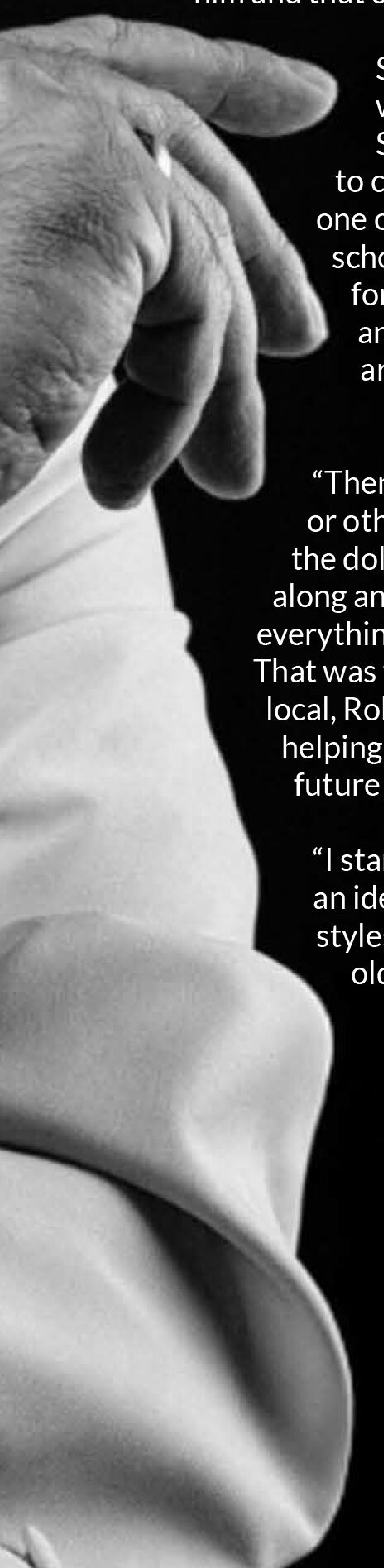
"The house we moved to had an old upright piano, a battered old thing. My father thought it would be good if I leaned to play it. I was about nine or ten, I think. He arranged lessons for me. God, I hated it! All that classical stuff, the criticism when I hadn't done my homework. It was like maths to me. Read-

ing notes on a page and the fingers trying to interpret it. I absolutely hated it then."

"But when I was bit older, I found music that really fired me up. All that early American roots stuff hiit the spot. Jerry Lee Lewis, all that old R&B stuff, rock'n roll. Some fabulous stuff. I also knew that I could pick out a few songs from the albums and records I was hearing. Jerry Lee played mostly in middle C, I could manage that. Fats Domino was the same. I could pick out the melody and began to enjoy it for the first time. I also had a music teacher who played in a band in the evenings as Rocky Cool and the Icemen. He was on radio regularly and on television sometimes. He helped me take it seriously."

Sanchez formed his first band as a late teenager, playing self-taught guitar in the Rockets, a rockabilly outfit, around the local West Midlands area. At this point, he met up with the guy he now credits as the most significant influence on his entire musical career and life.

"Andy Silvester made a huge impression on me. We became great friends. We'd listen to all sorts of music and he had the most amazing record collection ever. He also knew so much about it all. Robert Plant introduced me to him and that changed my life in reality!"



Sylvester, a multi-instrumentalist with Chicken Shack, Savoy Brown and Steve Gibbons, in effect led Sanchez to create the Big Town Playboys and one of the country's finest authentic old-school, R&B bands, leading to opening for Eric Clapton at the Royal Albert Hall and countless other gigs with major artists across the roots piste.

"Then, Gary Brooker heard me somehow or other. He came to see me. I'd been on the dole maybe three years, and he came along and met my parents. He told me he'd do everything he could to help me with my career! That was followed by another West Midlands local, Robert Plant, taking notice and also helping with my career. Instead of having no future I was a musician!"

"I started getting bands together with an idea that we could play in particular styles, capturing the essence of some older maybe 1940s or 1950s music acts. Hence the Playboys, for example. Sometimes it was frustrating, if maybe a player didn't really understand or get what I was about. No names, but we had a guitarist – a well-known guy from a top band – with us for a while and he just sounded like he was with his usual band only louder, noisier, like a 1970s pub band. That was never gonna work for me. So, it can be hard at times to create the sound and vibe I try to project!"

Sanchez also says he played guitar for a few years but though he himself is self-deprecating as a piano or keys man, admits it has given him a lengthy career at the top of the musical tree for many years.

"To be honest I never imagined I'd become a professional musician but life just sort of took me in a direction that came as a bit of a surprise, maybe, looking back on it!'

Mike
Sánchez

"It was seeing all those bands, the musicians of the sixties and seventies, with all the girls around them that probably made me think. Oh yea, I want that! Then I found the music that had meaning to me. Don't get me wrong, I can appreciate good music (by which he refers now to classical music) and know what's good and what's not. But it was waking up to what could be done."

He reflects on his career: "I worked some European festivals with great US bluesmen like Lowell Fulsome, Carey Bell, Lonnie Brooks and a guy who I absolutely loved and is still a main inspiration as a piano player, Little Wille Littlefield.. I even recorded a Gene Vincent tribute album, 'Crazy Legs', with Jeff Beck! In the early 1990s. It has led to me playing with Georgie Fame, Beverley Skeete, Albert Lee and Eddie Floyd, and, of course, Bill Wyman with the Rhythm Kings. I'll have. New album out next year but or now. I'm looking forward to the gig in Stoke at the end of January."

**EXPLORE**

LAKEWOOD RANCH
BLUESFEST
WATERSIDE PLACE LAKEWOOD RANCH, FL
PRESENTED BY
BANK OF AMERICA

**Herald the entrance of the new festival on the Blues map, the Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival! What is better than sunshine and warm weather in early December, topped with a blanket of hot live blues?**

✎+ 📷 Laura Carbone

Welcome to the inaugural year of the Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival, set in the beautiful and culturally rich Sarasota County, Florida. This festival has its roots in the Bradenton Blues Festival, which enjoyed a successful 12-year run before relocating to a scenic 8-acre island at Waterside Place in the exclusive community of Lakewood Ranch.

The Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival is brought to you by the renowned KBA-winning promoter Paul E. Benjamin of Benjamin Productions, along with Florida-based partners Morgan Bettes and Antonio Hernandez of Independent Jones. Paul's extensive history and experience in organizing top-notch blues festivals are reflected in this event, featuring a diverse lineup that includes celebrated award winners, fan favorites, and new discoveries, with a bountiful mix of females and Black artists to make the festival stamp real deal.

This year, the line-up was powerful, with the younger generation of blues artists to showcase, not your same old blues. Starting off with a true prodigy of the electric guitar and a soulful vocalist, Melody Angel. She was the discovery of this festival for many people, she has been rightfully dubbed "The Future of the Blues" and a true pleasure to witness her musical powers. Next up was the young blues and soul phenom, Dylan Triplett, a name that is everyone now knows, a Blues Music Award winner for Best Emerging Artist. With a stage presence similar to James Brown, he ignites the stage and captures the audience all in one fell swagger of his hips, a twist, a split and a funky cry. He even smoked some guitar riffs on stage for the first time, expanding his stage domain to include guitar. Mitch Woods and his Rocket 88's, a crowd favorite bought some modern jump blues and boogie-woogie and then gave birth to some rock n roll. Kat Riggins was a natural dynamo on stage, with high energy, soul-shaking and heart-rendering ballads.

Like a slingshot all over the stage, her soul, gospel-backed band danced hard just to keep up. Next up was Mike Welch, affectionately and aptly named "Monster Mike Welch" by actor/ghostbuster Dan Ackroyd at the age of 13 because of his guitar prowess. He famously teamed up with SugarRay and the Blue Tones which led to the acclaimed Welch-Ledbetter collaboration and multiple Blues Music Awards nods. Now, he steps into the spotlight fronting his own band with impeccable musical skill, the ability to give his guitar true emotions, and his soulful vocals in the style of Otis Rush. Mike's performance was a true festival highlight.

Following Mike Welch was Vanessa Collier the saxiest female in the blues and the sweetheart of the festival. Beyond talented in all aspects of performance, from saxophone, vocals and guitar to songwriting, bandleader, and stage persona. Everyone loves Vanessa Collier, and an added bonus Laura Chavez, BMA winner of Guitarist of the Year!

The festival showstopper and topper was the Grammy-nominated and seven-time BMA winner, The Danielle Nicole Band. As always, it was phenomenal with her powerhouse, make-you-cry vocals, and Brandon Millers' perfect tone on the guitar. At the end there was the power jam with Dylan Triplett, Vanessa Collier, and Mike Welch joining Danielle and her band on stage.

Florida, home of the Winter Blues Festivals, just got a new one that will be here to stay. It's a destination festival surrounded by white sandy beaches, art, sports, culture, and, of course, incredible music. Look for it the first weekend in December, and the 2025 Line-up to be announced soon. For more information about the festival and Lakewood Ranch go to: lakewoodranchbluesfest.com/

BLUESFEST
WATERSIDE PLACE, LAKEWOOD RANCH, FL

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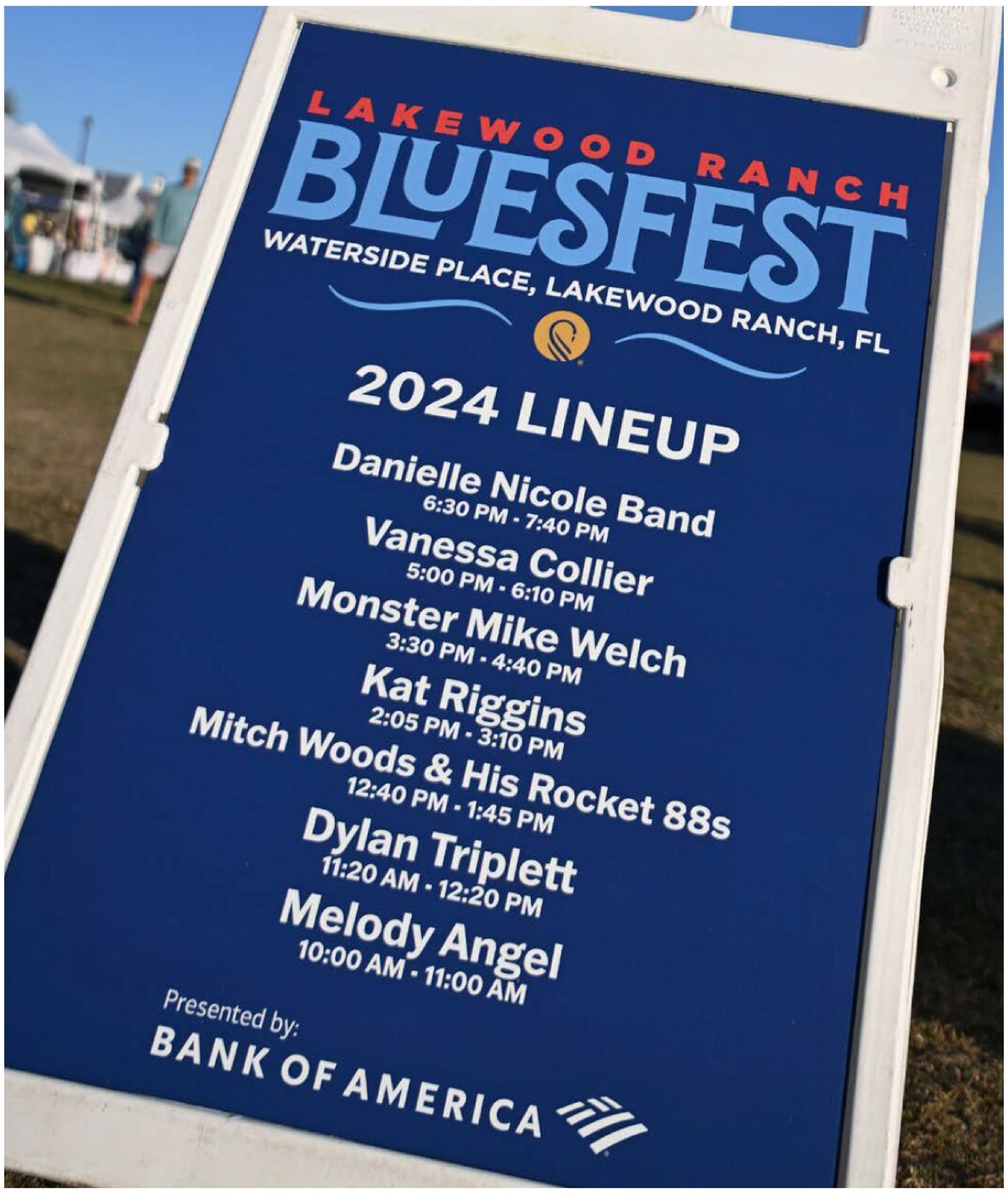

LAKEWOOD RANCH
BLUESFEST
WATERSIDE PLACE, LAKEWOOD RANCH, FL

2024 LINEUP

Danielle Nicole Band
6:30 PM - 7:40 PM
Vanessa Collier
5:00 PM - 6:10 PM
Monster Mike Welch
3:30 PM - 4:40 PM
Kat Riggins
2:05 PM - 3:10 PM
Mitch Woods & His Rocket 88s
12:40 PM - 1:45 PM
Dylan Triplett
11:20 AM - 12:20 PM
Melody Angel
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Presented by:
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# Mike Sanchez

# & His Band

**Feat. original members of "The Big Town Playboys"**

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*"I was drawn to him" - Robert Plant*

*"People who see him never forget him" - Albert Lee*

*"He is our Little Richard" - Jeff Beck*

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# LUCINDA WILLIAMS

# ABBEY ROAD STYLE

**It's 45 years since this doyenne of alt country rock, Lucinda Williams, released her debut album, Ramblin' On My Mind. So, what better way to celebrate this musical milestone than to release an album of choice cover songs by the modern masters of the 45s, The Beatles. Remarkably, she is the first artist to record Beatles songs at Abbey Road Studios, since the Fab Four originally recorded them, and the song selections have a personal connection to her and are now released in her highly acclaimed Lu's Jukebox series.**

Paul Davies  Supplied

## Supporting a Fellow Artist

I rendezvous, via Zoom, with a large headphone-wearing Lucinda, who relates all the details of the making of this tribute to The Beatles to me from a white-bricked Manhattan loft prior to her participation in a benefit concert for singer-songwriter Jesse Malin. She shares the details: "I'm playing a benefit concert for Jesse Malin at The Beacon. He had a spinal stroke. They put together a concert, with different artists, to help raise funds for Jesse. So, I'm going to do that."

It's a poignant show of support, as it's now four years since Lucinda suffered a similar medical trauma that occurred after the release of her previous Lu's Jukebox homage to The Stones. Nevertheless, she appears to be resolutely making up for lost time.

## Taking on The Beatles

Choosing which Beatles tracks to cover was no easy feat, as Lucinda explains: "We were thinking of who to do next, because we'd already done The Stones, Bob Dylan and Tom Petty, so it seemed like we should do a Beatles one," she declares.

It's a refreshing breath of musical air to hear Lucinda's lively interpretations of not-so-obvious song selections: "That was a challenge. I just thought of some off the top of my head. It's kind of funny because the very first ones I thought of were the real early ones that I heard when I was a kid."

She smiles at this recollection as she reveals her beautiful piano key-like long white teeth. "I started making a list, and then I just got out some of their albums and went through them to remind myself of some more... That's when I picked out Yer Blues. I'd kind of forgotten about that one and it really spoke to me...It's real edgy and kind of dark and bluesy. It ended up being a really good one for me to do. Don't Let Me Down was definitely at the top of the list, too."

## Timeless Song Selections

There's a heavy song selection from latter-day Beatles records: The White Album, Abbey Road, Let It Be. Lucinda elaborates: "When I first was thinking of songs, the early ones popped into my head first, the ones I heard when I was a kid, like I Want To Hold Your Hand. I still love those. So many of their songs have stood the test of time."

Lucinda further reflects on this timeless quality: "They don't sound old or dated or anything. The point is that it was not easy to make a list of songs."

She momentarily gathers her thoughts: "The other way I decided, though, was when I was sitting down with the songs and how they felt to me when I was singing them... That narrowed down the list some more," she confirms.

## Recording at Abbey Road

It was a case of more haste, less waste, as Lucinda and her band had a very short space of time in which to record this album. I recall seeing her perform in early 2024 at the O2 Indigo, London, with LA Edwards supporting, and it was during this period that she went into Abbey Road Studios and nailed down this record in three days flat. She recounts: "We didn't have a lot of time... we had three days and it ended up being two days, because the first day was kind of a washout: logistical difficulties."

This tight window gave the recordings a spontaneous, live feel: "I'm so glad to hear you say that. I mean, we had a couple of rehearsals and then we went right in and

started recording... I wanted it to sound like me. I wanted that to come through. We didn't really sit down and talk about the arrangements for the most part... The drummer – Butch Norton – counted us in and off we went. That was pretty much it."

## Abbey Road: A Musical Pilgrimage

Abbey Road Studios holds an unparalleled status as the pre-eminent home of modern music. For Lucinda, the experience left a deep mark: "It's the first time any of us had been there, so it was a surprise for the whole band and crew," she shares, flashing a Cheshire Cat grin.
"I was shy about it at first. I felt a little intimidated... Once we got in there and started working on the songs, it became kind of second nature."
I ask her how it feels to be acknowledged as the first artist to record Beatles songs at Abbey Road since the Fab Four: "A little scary, to tell you the truth. I didn't know how it was going to be received... It's intimidating... but you sort of must set that aside, go in and just do the songs and not overthink it."

## Covering and Being Covered

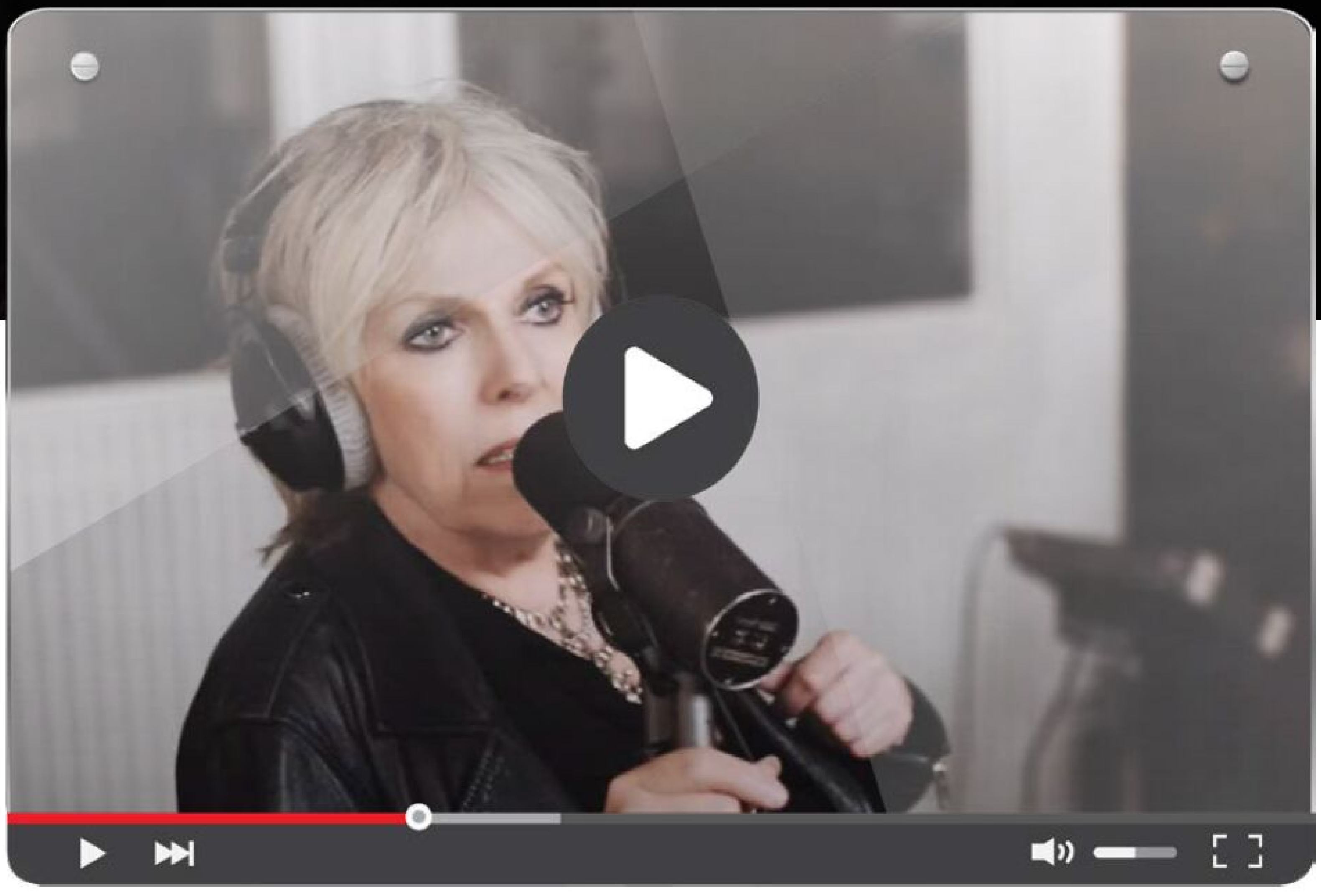
Lucinda's songs have also been covered by many artists, and I ask how she feels about this: "I love that. When somebody covers one of my songs, it's an honour... I have

to be able to feel good about it and get inside the song and everything."

Her band, Buick Six, have also done a stellar job with these Beatles covers: "The band is doing a great job with these songs... You can hear the signature guitar parts... but it still sounds like me. That's what I wanted to achieve and that's what people have been saying, and that's all I could hope for."

## The Long and Winding Road

It's been a long and winding road for Lucinda Williams to eventually reach Abbey Road Studios and to do so in



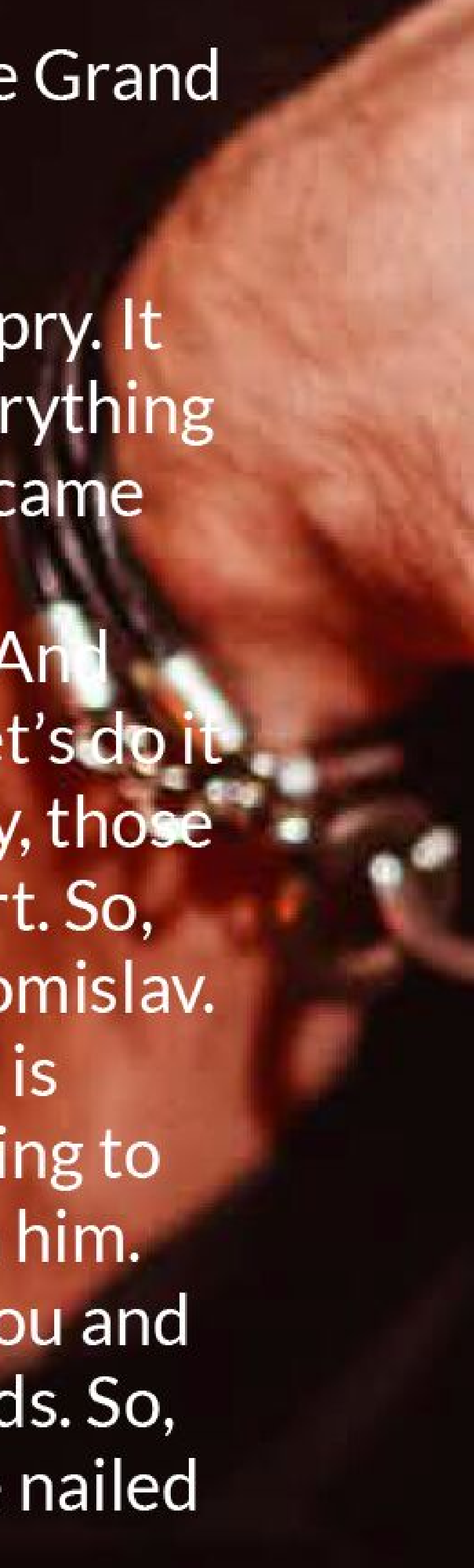
good health following her stroke. Without a doubt, this album is something for her to be especially proud of. For more information on Lucinda's music and upcoming tour dates, visit www.lucindawilliams.com.

# ALL ROADS LEAD TO NASHVILLE

## TOMISLAV GOLUBAN

**Croatian blues maestro Tomislav Goluban is preparing to usher in the New Year with a collaborative album featuring Crooked Eye Tommy. The record sees the pair bring their combined musical forces together as part of a project that was recorded in Music City, hence the name Nashville Road.**

Adam Kennedy Martin Turk



With a career spanning more than 20 years, the musician extraordinaire has had a great year. "I think that this year was one of the best years in my professional career. We have had lots of good concerts and two albums released this year. And the new one is in preparation to be released in January," said Tomislav. "So, it's been really busy and really good - I'm satisfied."

It's rare for Tomislav Goluban to undertake collaborative albums such as his forthcoming release. How did this project come to fruition? "All the good and bad things always come spontaneously and accidentally. So, it was the situation with Crooked. He had some plans with my friend, one musician from Croatia, a bass player. And they already set up that Crooked Eye will come to Croatia to play a few concerts with them. And they called me to see if I could jump on some dates, just to fill the calendar. And I did it, it was summertime".

"We had a great time. And when the Crooked was in Croatia, I found out that I had two nominations for the Josie Music Awards. And that award ceremony is taking place in Nashville," said Tomislav. "And Crooked is from Nashville. And we are sitting in my kitchen at the table. And I said, well, probably it's another internet or web award. Because nowadays everybody's putting on some awards. And he told me, no - the Josie Awards is really nice. And it is a great place too, because it is taking place at the Grand Ole Opry."

He adds: "We had a great time at the Grand Ole Opry. It was my first time in that fabulous building and everything was nice. Of course, we had a couple of gigs, and I came prepared with the songs because already when he was in Croatia, I had an idea to record something. And everything was just spontaneous. We said, okay, let's do it in Nashville because we have Monday and Tuesday, those are the dates which are not so great to do a concert. So, we went to the studio, and we recorded," recalls Tomislav. "The record is almost 100% live. Every instrument is recorded live in the studio. So, it was a fabulous thing to do with such great musicians who are playing with him. When you have in the studio guys who think like you and play music like you play, you are already best friends. So, everything was great, and I'm really happy that we nailed it."

The album was recorded in just two days. "I think that in the blues business, it is a common story because we know what we want to do, and we don't have much money or to waste time in the studio," he says.

Nashville felt like a home away from home for the artist. "I live in the Northern part of Croatia, and I travel a lot to

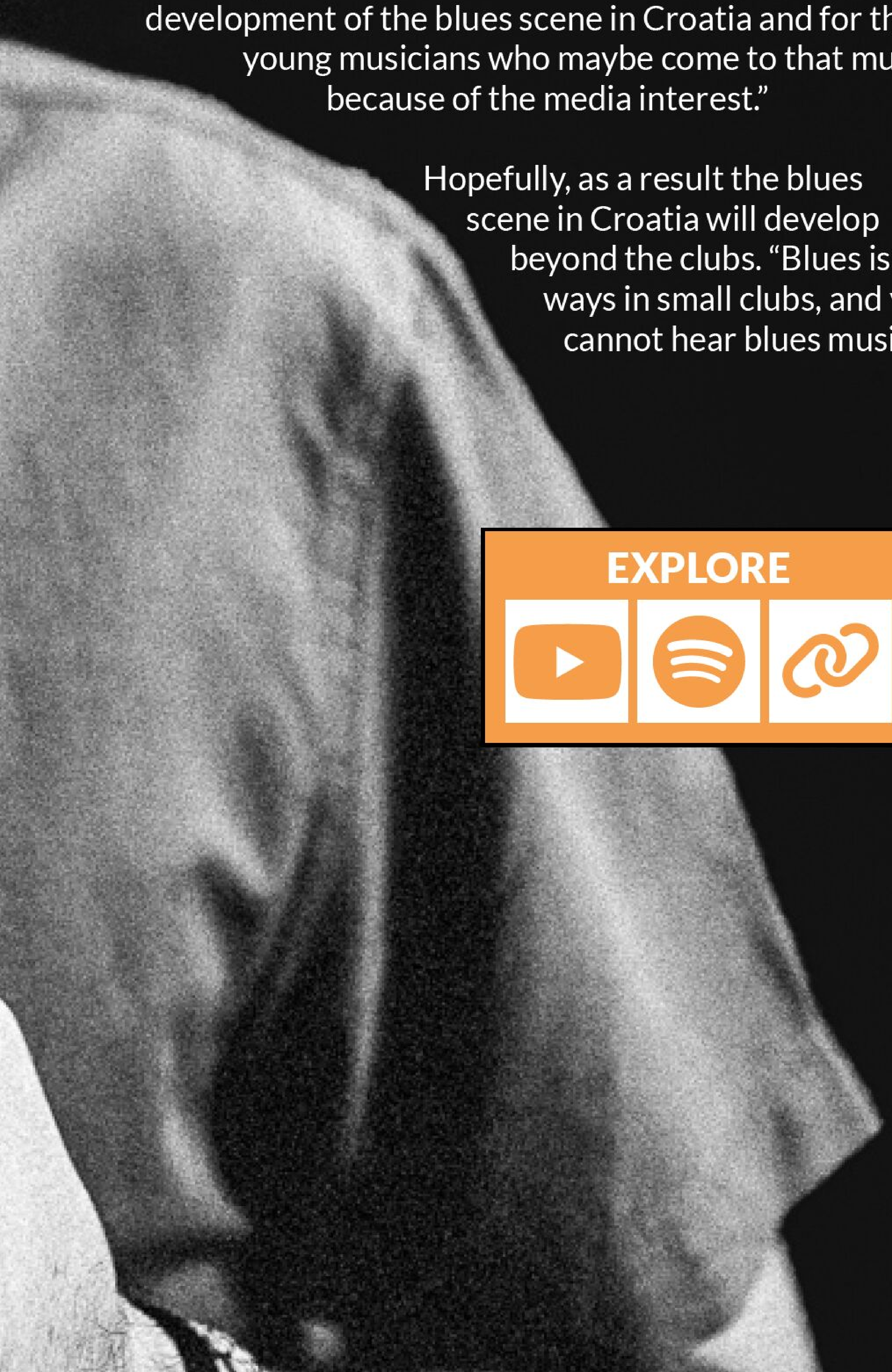
many countries in Europe and America. And I've never been somewhere where I wished to stay. But Nashville, especially because Crooked lives in a suburb of Nashville, those regions remind me of my place where I live in the Northern part of Croatia. Just a little bigger, with all those hills and nature. And I said, wow, this is something maybe one day I can call another home because it is similar but bigger."

He adds: "Nashville is a monster because you have everything over there. Especially, it is great when you have somebody from the inside, like I have Crooked and his friends, because they know where the jam sessions are, they know where the blues clubs are. We didn't go to a country concert, because our interest is more in the blues and maybe a little bit of jazz."

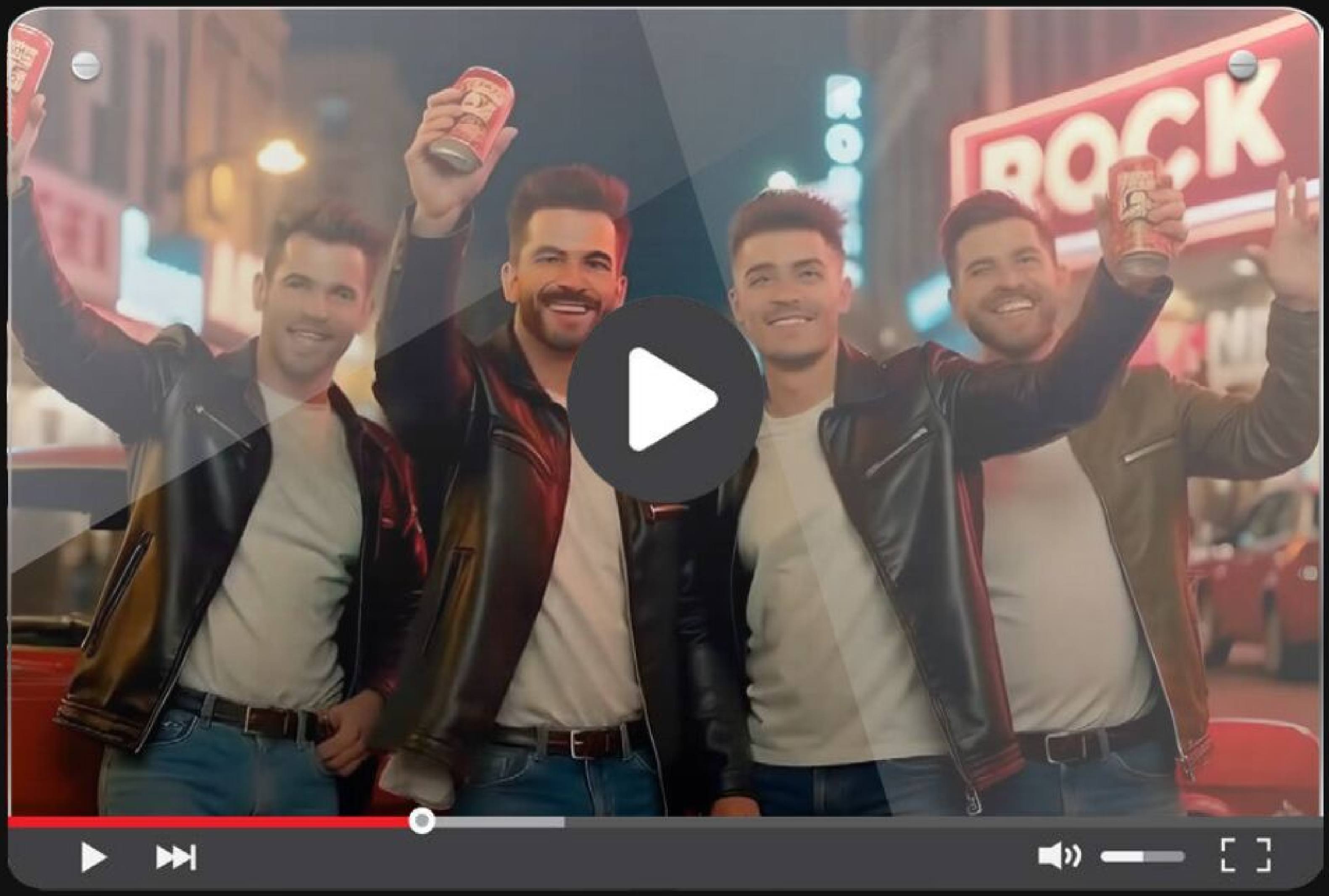
Of course, Nashville has become a huge destination for music fans globally. "People from all over the world are coming to Nashville to see the guys and the girls in the booths and listen to country music, and drink and eat and stuff. But those nice clubs are always somewhere on the side in a tiny alley or something. So, we had a great time during the day and the night. There was no time for sleep," he says.

Whilst Nashville may be thriving, so too is the blues scene in Croatia. "Every day it is growing, so that's great. And at the beginning of April, we have the European Blues Challenge in Croatia, in Split. And it is the biggest event Croatia has and will have, I think," he says. "To have those organizations and all those musicians and the PR and marketing for that event, I think it is really great for the development of the blues scene in Croatia and for the young musicians who maybe come to that music because of the media interest."

Hopefully, as a result the blues scene in Croatia will develop beyond the clubs. "Blues is always in small clubs, and you cannot hear blues music on commercial radio stations or national television, blues is always on the side. And this type of event, especially like you mentioned, Thrill Blues Festival, those festivals are huge. And it is taking place on the coast in the summertime. So, it is a really good collaboration of tourism, culture, good music, and good vibrations. People come from all over the world, mixing with Croatian people, and everything functions," he says. "And every year it is bigger and bigger and big names are coming, like the headliners of the festivals."



**EXPLORE**



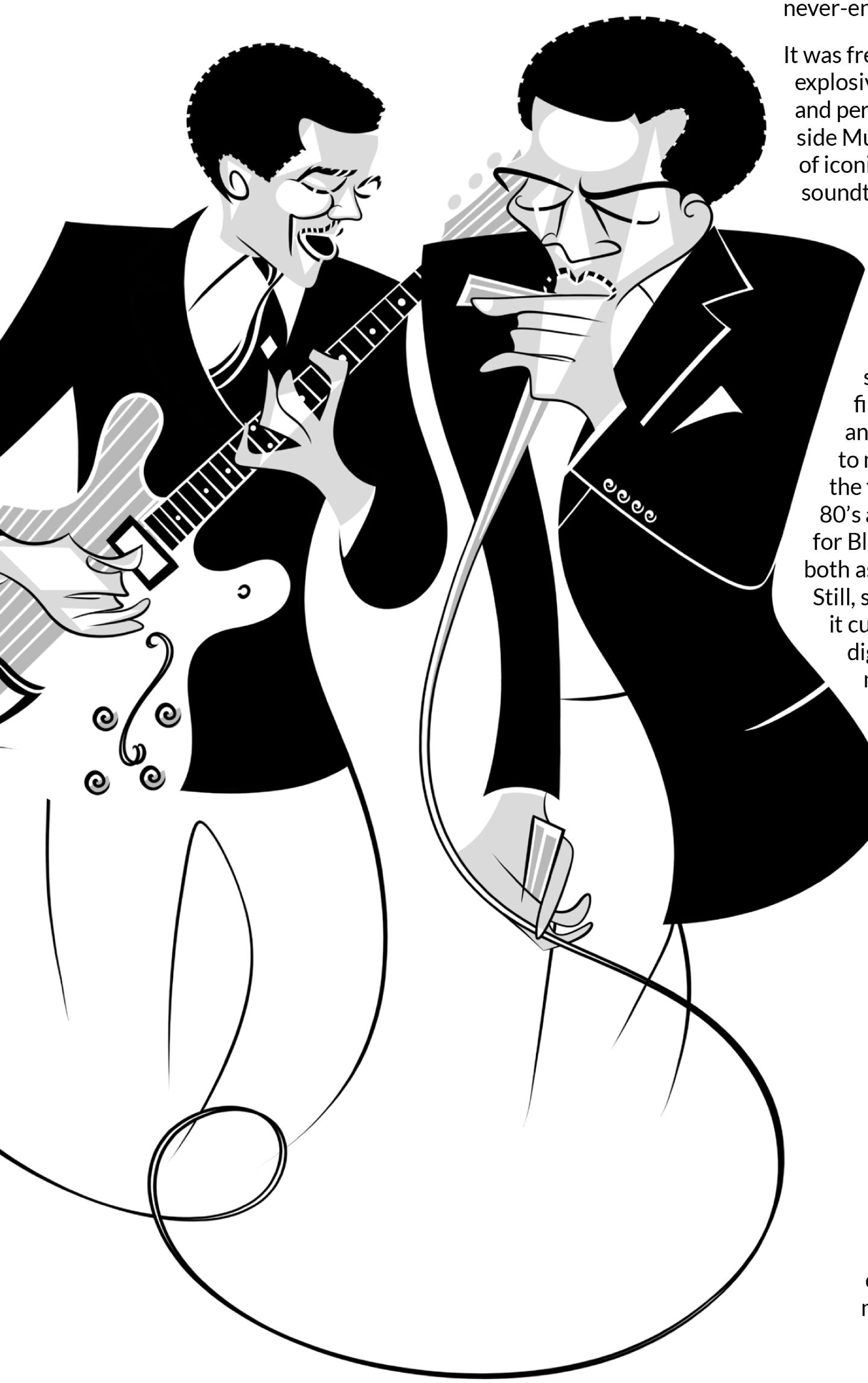
Beyond his musical career, Tomislav Goluban has also developed an educational blues music program named "The Harmonica in Blues" to inform children about the instrument and the world of blues music. "I developed a nice programme. And now, it is sponsored by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia. So, it means that it is on a national level. So, they are sending me to schools all around Croatia. And I'm talking to the kids about blues and harmonica," he says. "Harmonica can be afforded by every kid, especially nowadays. So that was the starting point for thinking, okay, maybe they don't know anything about the blues. Maybe they don't like that kind of music. Maybe they listen to something else. But I'm always trying to just involve them with the music, whatever type, just play and learn to listen. That is the first thing to learn to listen." He adds: "And every class, workshop, seminar, or whatever is great. They really love it, and they're all happy."

With the release of his new album just around the corner, how is Tomislav Goluban feeling about the impending unveiling of Nashville Road? "It is my 16th studio album, but it is the first one on which I have collaborated on the whole album with one person - Crooked Eye Tommy. So, I must say that I'm thrilled because it is the first situation to have a collaboration like that. So, I'm curious what the listeners and media will say. I'm looking forward to it."

Nashville Road, the new album from Tomislav Goluban and Crooked Eye Tommy, will be released via Overton Music on 17th January, 2025.

### The Illustrated Blues Of Brian Kramer

# Buddy & Junior: Hoodoo Men



Hoodoo Man Blues (Delmark 1965) was my introduction to Junior Wells and Buddy Guy. It was a remarkable discovery for a young teen in Brooklyn, finding his way through the start of a journey through this music and culture that is still never-ending.

It was fresh, playful, spontaneous, sparse yet explosive and filled with both their personality and personal stamp of Blues. Right there alongside Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson, and a list of iconic Blues figures, this was part of my daily soundtrack.

Within a few years of getting that album, I would be introduced to Junior and Buddy in New York, at the Lone Star Café and seeing them on stage live for the first time compounded what struck me and blew me away from the first listen of Hoodoo Man; the chemistry and communication. I was so very fortunate to meet them both that night, which became the first of many occasions. It was the mid 80's and not necessarily the proudest period for Blues appreciation in the US, so they were both as well as many other favorites accessible. Still, something special happened for me and it culminated in a re-doubled intensity to digest, learn, and understand this profound music.

They were both to say the least, very gracious and generous with their time and attention to a youngster fumbling his way through. The rest is history, as they say…

Hoodoo Man Blues was my introduction to Junior Wells and Buddy Guy and I return to it often as a reminder of what is possible with the Blues, how it can unfold and captivate and even cross boundaries unknown, just by taking it in and letting it happen.

It's still my top three most important releases of all-time.

So, this illustration is a revisit to the original "Blues Brothers", trying to capture the essence of that spirit and connection that still grabs me and shakes me to the very core of why I dare.

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# LARKIN POE

Princeton Amp

# IN BLOOM

**Larkin Poe, the Grammy winning sister duo of Rebecca and Megan Lovell, have carved a distinctive niche in the music world with their electrifying blend of blues, rock, and Americana. Hailing from Georgia, their soulful harmonies, fiery slide guitar, and gritty, roots-infused sound have drawn comparisons to legends while forging a path uniquely their own.**

**Colin Campbell** **Supplied**

Known for their dynamic live performances and a fearless approach to reinventing classic genres, Rebecca's commanding vocals and Megan's masterful lap steel guitar create a synergy that is both raw and refined. Larkin Poe bring authenticity, passion, and innovation to every note. Today, they sit down to talk about their journey, inspirations, and the stories behind their music and their new release, Bloom.

## A SISTERLY BOND FORGED IN MUSIC

"Larkin Poe technically formed in 1991 when I was born," jokes Rebecca. Growing up on 70 acres of rural northern Georgia, the sisters enjoyed a "Huck Finn upbringing," spending their days building forts and exploring the wild. From the start, their bond was unbreakable. "We were always referred to as 'the girls,'" Rebecca explains. "A package deal. Very close in age, we started projecting together very young." Despite conventional wisdom warning against mixing family with business, the Lovell sisters embraced it. "We've been willing to do the hard work to continue evolving as sisters," Rebecca says. Today, the duo feels they are hitting their stride, both personally and musically.

## CLASSICAL BEGINNINGS TO AMERICAN ROOTS

Music has been a cornerstone of their lives from an early age. "Our parents put us in classical violin and piano lessons when we were three and four years old," Rebecca shares. But everything changed when they discovered bluegrass as teenagers.

"Hearing bluegrass was pivotal," Megan recalls. "At 13 and 14, we fell in love with improvisation and traditional American music. That's when the idea of making music became real for us." This newfound passion led them to form their first band, The Lovell Sisters, alongside their eldest sibling Jessica. By 2010, Rebecca and Megan launched Larkin Poe, and they haven't looked back since.

"We've toured more than we've stayed home ever since 2005," Rebecca laughs. Their relentless work ethic has culminated in albums like Blood Harmony and their latest release, Bloom. "This record sums up our journey," Rebecca says. "It reflects who we are, where we've come from, and all the unique, diverse musical angles that define us."

## DEFYING GENRES WITH "ROOTS ROCK 'N' ROLL"

When asked to describe their music, the sisters embrace the term "roots rock 'n' roll," deliberately leaving room for flexibility. "We want to play whatever we feel like," Rebecca says. Their influences range from classical to bluegrass to hard rock, a diversity that has become their signature.

This eclecticism has served them well. In the past year alone, Larkin Poe performed at a variety of festivals, from country to bluegrass to rock and pop. "How cool is that?" Rebecca beams. "We get to experience all these different things because we can fit anywhere."

Their versatility hasn't gone unnoticed. Larkin Poe has won a Grammy for Best Contemporary Blues Album and received accolades in the Americana genre, including an award for Americana Duo of the Year and a nomination for International Americana Band of the Year in the UK. "It's really fun to balance and straddle different genre boundaries," Megan says.

## THE ADVICE THAT SHAPED THEM

Over the years, the sisters have received sage advice from music legends. Elvis Costello's guidance on resisting categorisation stands out. "He's an artist who's explored so many musical depths and constantly redefined himself," Rebecca says. "He suggested that staying fresh and open to change could ensure longevity, and we've embraced that wholeheartedly."

dirt floor
INPUTS
BASS
MID
SPEED

“We run our own label, our own decisions”

Another pivotal moment came while touring with Keith Urban, who offered tips on commanding large arenas. “He taught us to perform to the back row,” Rebecca shares. “Your movements and presence need to reach every person in the room.” This advice proved invaluable as the duo transitioned to performing in larger venues.

## BIG STAGES VS. INTIMATE VENUES

Rebecca and Megan enjoy the variety their career offers, from intimate acoustic sets to rowdy rock performances. “There’s a perfect balance,” Rebecca explains. “Big rooms have collective energy, but it can get too big. We also love smaller, more personal settings, like an acoustic duo tour with Megan on lap steel and me on guitar.” Regardless of the setting, the sisters cherish the connection with their audiences. “It’s about shared energy,” Megan adds. “We want to keep things fresh and unpredictable.”

## HEROES AND INSPIRATIONS

While Chris Whitley remains Rebecca’s top influence, Bloom, saw the sisters drawing inspiration from female trailblazers like Bonnie Raitt, Joan Jett, and Mavis Staples. “They’re unafraid to tell it like it is,” Rebecca says. Megan highlights their blues roots, citing Son House, Skip James, and Aretha Franklin as key influences. “We also let our Georgia roots shine through,” Megan notes, pointing to the Black Crowes and Blackberry Smoke.

## THE ESSENCE OF BLOOM

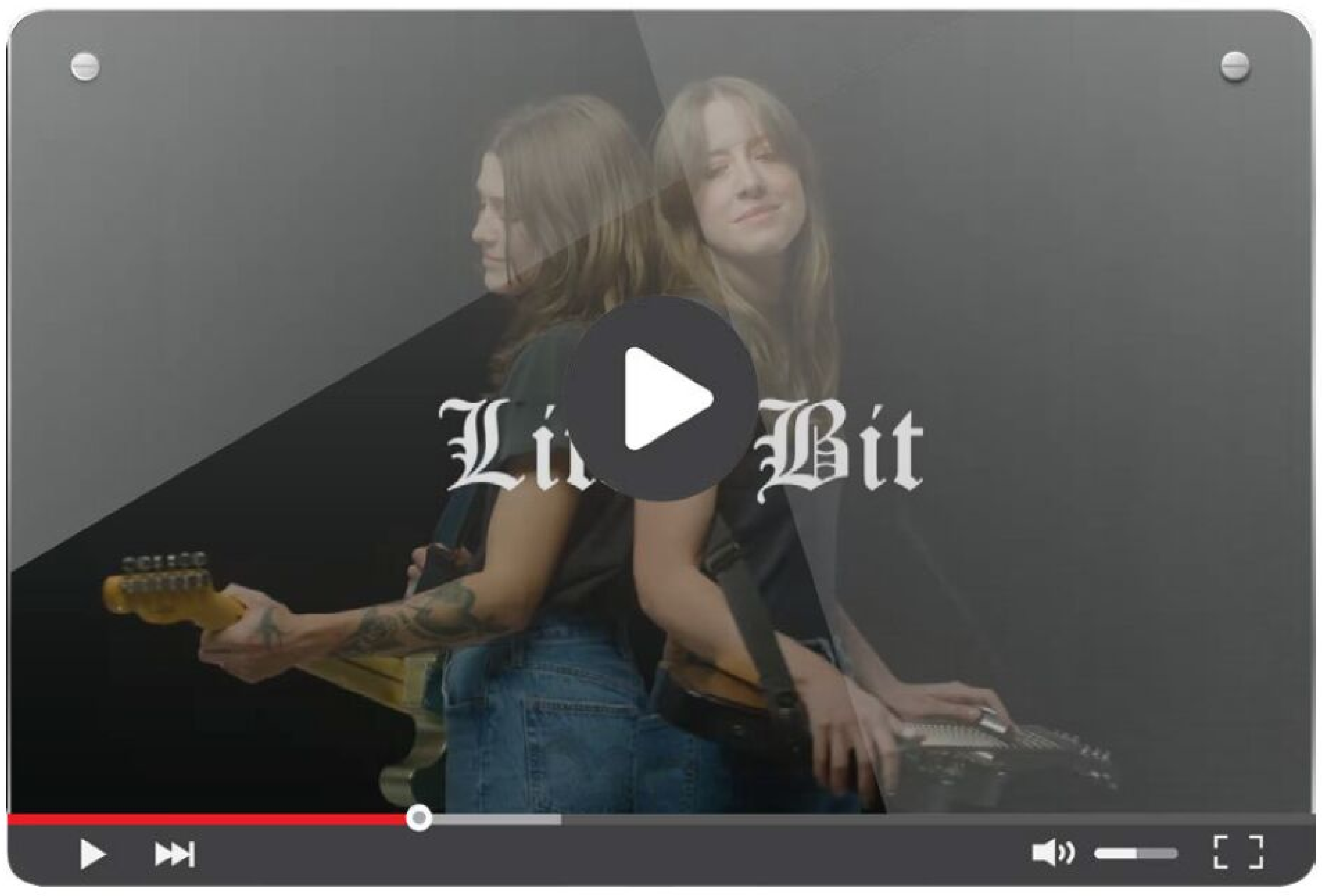
Their Grammy win for Blood Harmony, set a high bar, but Larkin Poe isn’t chasing accolades. “We create music we love,” Rebecca says. “If it connects with just one person, that’s the true value of music.”

For the Lovell sisters, letting go of perfection has been key. “Once you release a song, it becomes everyone’s,” Rebecca reflects. “We’ve normalised a spirit of moving on and living in the present. That’s how we continue to experience life and music to the fullest.”

With their newest release, Larkin Poe has crafted an album that captures their growth and passion. As they push boundaries and explore new horizons, one thing is certain: their journey is as authentic and dynamic as their music.

## CRAFTING THE PERFECT POP-ROOTS FUSION

When discussing the track A Little Bit, Megan Lovell’s enthusiasm for structure and pop songwriting shines through. “I love a good pop song structure,” Megan explains. “I love roots music, love blues music, but there’s something magical about the way a pop song can immediately get under your skin. I’m very proud of the structure of A Little Bit. It’s well-constructed and has that sticky quality that keeps you humming it.” Interestingly, the song’s inception came from a dream Rebecca’s husband, Tyler Bryant, had. “He woke up one morning and kept saying, ‘A little bit, just a little bit,’ over and over,” Rebecca recounts. “We started working on it together, but the chorus was different then. When I brought it to Megan, I said, ‘We need to Larkin Poe-ify this.” The sisters collaborated to reshape the song, particularly the chorus. “We laboured over those lyrics,” Megan recalls. “We wanted the song to reflect comments we’ve received over the years, like, ‘Oh, you’ll be happy when you’re playing arenas’ or ‘You’ll make it when you have a hit song.’ But we’re happy where we are. We run our own label, make our own decisions, and value the control we have over our career.” The final version of A Little Bit became a statement about contentment and the choices they’ve made as artists.



## THEMES OF GROWTH AND ACCEPTANCE IN BLOOM

With Bloom, Larkin Poe delves into personal and universal themes. For Rebecca and Megan, the album captures a moment of peace and acceptance in their lives.

“More so than any point in our lives, there’s a sense of peace,” Rebecca shares. “Peace is hard-won. It’s about acceptance over resistance, and through these songs, we’ve worked out a lot of internal stuff.”

The sisters describe life as a roller coaster of emotions, with societal and internal pressures adding noise. Megan elaborates, “It’s hard to keep priorities in line and not feel like you’re too this or too that. But through writing and recording this album, we found clarity.”

Creating Bloom has been cathartic for the duo. “After making this record and talking about it in interviews, I feel differently,” Rebecca admits. “The process brought a lot of meaning and reinforced what this record represents for us.”

## THE GENESIS OF “BLOOM AGAIN”

One of the standout tracks on Larkin Poe’s latest album is Bloom Again, a song that beautifully showcases Rebecca and Megan Lovell’s harmonies. “It’s one of my favourites,” Rebecca shared. “It came together so easily and set the tone for the entire project.” The song’s origins trace back to a suggestion from Mike Campbell of the Heartbreakers. "He came to one of our shows in Los Angeles with Steve Ferrone and jammed with us," Megan recounted. "Afterward, he suggested we include a sibling harmony moment in our set, inspired by the Everly Brothers."

Drawing from Campbell's advice, the sisters crafted Bloom Again, channelling the iconic sound of the Everly Brothers; artists they had covered before. "When you immerse yourself in someone else's work, you gain a deeper understanding of their art," Rebecca explained. "That insight helped us pluck the song from the air."

Larkin Poe
MOCKINGBIRD

## THE CYCLICAL NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS

The lyrics of Bloom Again explore the complexities of relationships. "Romantic relationships often feel cyclical," Rebecca observed. "You revisit the same arguments, which can be frustrating. But it's important to maintain faith that you'll rise above and bloom again." Both sisters, married to fellow musicians, drew from personal experience. "Being married to men who understand the demands of our careers helps," Megan noted. "There's a lot of empathy and shared experience, which strengthens both our relationships and our music."

## EASY LOVE: A TALE IN TWO PARTS

Another highlight of the album is Easy Love Part One and Two. "For years, Larkin Poe didn't have love songs," Megan admitted. "But I wanted to write one for my husband, inspired by J.J. Cale's laid-back style." The initial idea for Easy Love Part One came during a day of recording in Rebecca's home studio. "We were downstairs recording, and later that evening, Tyler [Rebecca's husband] and I kept singing it while making dinner. It evolved into something different, and the next day we shared the idea with Megan."

What emerged was a two-part song chronicling the evolution of a relationship. "Part One is about the early days; light and playful," Rebecca said. "Part Two reflects the depth and sweetness of a long-term relationship." Despite challenges in crafting distinct lyrics for the second part, the sisters embraced the creative serendipity. "We thought, why not? The Black Crowes would've done it!" Megan laughed.

## THE PRACTICALITIES OF TOURING

The Lovell sisters' unique dynamic extends beyond the studio. "Larkin Poe is our legacy," Megan stated. "Balancing that with our marriages requires commitment and understanding." Their shared experiences as musicians help foster that balance. "Touring isn't glamorous; it's brushing your teeth in weird venue bathrooms and navigating strange showers across rural America and Europe," Rebecca quipped. "But our husbands' support makes it all manageable."

The sisters acknowledged the challenge their relationship poses to others. "Rebecca and I are everything to each other, which can be intense," Megan said. "But our husbands hold space for that, which allows us to thrive both personally and professionally."

## LEGACY AND INNOVATION

As they continue to innovate within the blues genre, the Lovell sisters remain deeply connected to their roots and their fans. "Larkin Poe is more than a band; it's a reflection of who we are," Rebecca concluded. "These songs represent our journey, our growth, and the love we share with those around us."

With tracks like Bloom Again and Easy Love Part One and Two, Larkin Poe once again demonstrates their ability to blend personal storytelling with universally resonant themes, solidifying their place in the blues world.

## LOOKING AHEAD: CONNECTION THROUGH MUSIC

"We can't wait to play these songs live," Megan says. "It's going to be magical to connect with fans and hear what the album means to them."

For Rebecca, the live experience is about more than just the performance. "Music is a conversation, we create it, but listeners give it life by interpreting it. That exchange is what makes this journey so fulfilling."

With plans to tour extensively, Larkin Poe is ready to bring Bloom to life onstage. And as always, they remain deeply grateful for their fans and the journey they share.

"We appreciate everything," Megan concludes. "We're exactly where we want to be, and we wouldn't trade it for anything."

**Larkin Poe's new album, Bloom, is out on January 24, 2025. Packed with soulful harmonies, roots-rock energy, and heartfelt storytelling, it's a must-hear for blues fans everywhere.**

**For further information see website: larkinpoe.com**

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# BIG BLUES REVIEWS

## LARKIN POE

### BLOOM

*Tricki-Woo Records*

BLOOM
Larkin Poe

**Larkin Poe's newest release is a vibrant testament to personal authenticity and artistic growth. Collaborating with Tyler Bryant on production, this delivers a sonically rich blend of soulful harmonies and raw instrumentation. The releases' standout tracks, such as the poignant Mockingbird, and the bold, If God Is A Woman, highlight the duo's ability to marry introspective storytelling with dynamic musicality. Each of these eleven songs reflect a seamless fusion of modern energy and traditional influences, with elements of folk, blues, and rock woven throughout them. This balance of past and present gives this release a timeless quality that underscores the Lovell sisters' mastery of their craft. Lyrically, this is a celebration of individuality and embracing imperfections. Little Bit, explores the human experience of reflecting on simple things in life and appreciating same. Similarly, Pearls explores self-resilience this song builds up an energy of its own. Easy Love (Parts 1 and 2) contrast from rocky tones to a soulful laid-back ballad. Bluephoria is delivered with strength power and the groove is palpable, a true crowd pleaser, riffs, and lap steel with strong vocals. Final tune, Bloom Again slows the pace, perfect harmonies on this song that tugs at the heart strings, just sublime and it soars into a musical maelstrom at the end. Thematically, the songs explore finding clarity amidst societal noise, a message that feels both personal and universal. This release solidifies their place as torchbearers of American roots music. Their ability to evolve artistically while remaining authentic makes this their best yet. It's a triumphant reminder of the power of self-expression and the enduring spirit of blues-infused storytelling.**

**COLIN CAMPBELL**

**PRE-SAVE**

## GILES ROBSON & JOHN PRIMER

### TEN CHICAGO BLUES CLASSICS

*Blues House Productions*

John Primer is a bona fide Chicago Blues legend; his legacy etched through collaborations with icons like Muddy Waters, Junior Wells, and Magic Slim and Bob Corritore. His recent partnership with harmonica virtuoso Giles Robson is nothing short of electrifying. Primer, still commanding the stage with the vigour and charm of a man half his age, has found a perfect foil in Robson, Jersey-based harmonica master who seamlessly matches the guitarist's fire with his own. Together, they dive headlong into unbridled interpretations of the Windy City's most revered blues classics. The duo's story began in 2023, when Giles organised a tour celebrating Chicago Blues legends. That meeting sparked a bond that only deepened over the next year, culminating in another tour, and now, this extraordinary album. The camaraderie between Primer and Robson is palpable, their mutual respect and synergy weaving through every note. Giles takes the microphone on seven of the album's ten tracks, delivering renditions that are as intelligent as they are heartfelt. Drawing from the repertoires of titans like Muddy Waters, Little Walter, Eddie Taylor, and both Sonny Boy Williamsons, Robson breathes fresh life into these classics. Tracks like Blow Wind Blow, My Babe, Long Distance Call, Dealin' With The Devil, and Bad Boy, pulsate with energy, while instrumental gems like Juke, Got My Mojo Workin,' and Last Night highlight the dazzling interplay between Primer's masterful guitar work and Robson's nimble harmonica. This release isn't just a collaboration; it's a celebration of a genre that's notoriously difficult to elevate without losing its raw soul. Yet, Primer and Robson don't just succeed, they shine, delivering a vibrant, authentic homage to Chicago Blues that will have aficionados and newcomers alike hooked from start to finish.

*COLIN CAMPBELL*

# INNES SIBUN

## THE PREACHER

*Independent*

Innes Sibun
THE PREACHER

**As soon as I received a copy of this album, I knew that I would be in for a treat. I've been lucky enough to have seen Innes Siburn playing live a few times over the years. On top of that, Innes has played with some of the biggest names in Blues, Johnny Winter, Walter Trout, Taj Mahal, Peter Green, and Robert Plant. I think that you will agree, he's been in some great company, not a bad CV huh? Then I noticed a couple of names that are on this album, Charlie Jones, John Baggot, and Marcus Malone. So, on the album, there are quite a few instrumental pieces on The Preacher, in fact, the first two tracks, one of which is the title track. I Found Your Letter, brings the brilliant vocal talents of Marcus Malone to the album, I've long since been an admirer of his work, so I was especially pleased to hear him adding his vocals alongside the sweet silky guitar work of Innes Sibun. As I listened to the album, I began to get a warm mellow feeling, the tunes ebb and flow between Jazz and Blues effortlessly, highlighting the excellent bunch of musicians that helped to make this album so good. It is the type of album that Can be enjoyed anywhere, and by that I mean, on a car journey, pottering around the house, or just simply relaxing with a beverage or two whilst sitting in your favourite armchair. Innes Sibun contributes to the writing on ten of the eleven tracks, something else that he is very good at doing, songwriting. Let It Go, sees Marcus Malone taking the vocals, he and Innes complement each other so well. This album is brilliant, not a poor song, with no fillers, just great Blues and Blues/Jazz tunes. I'd love to see everyone involved in the album to present it in a live setting, who knows?**

> *This album is brilliant, not a poor song, with no fillers*

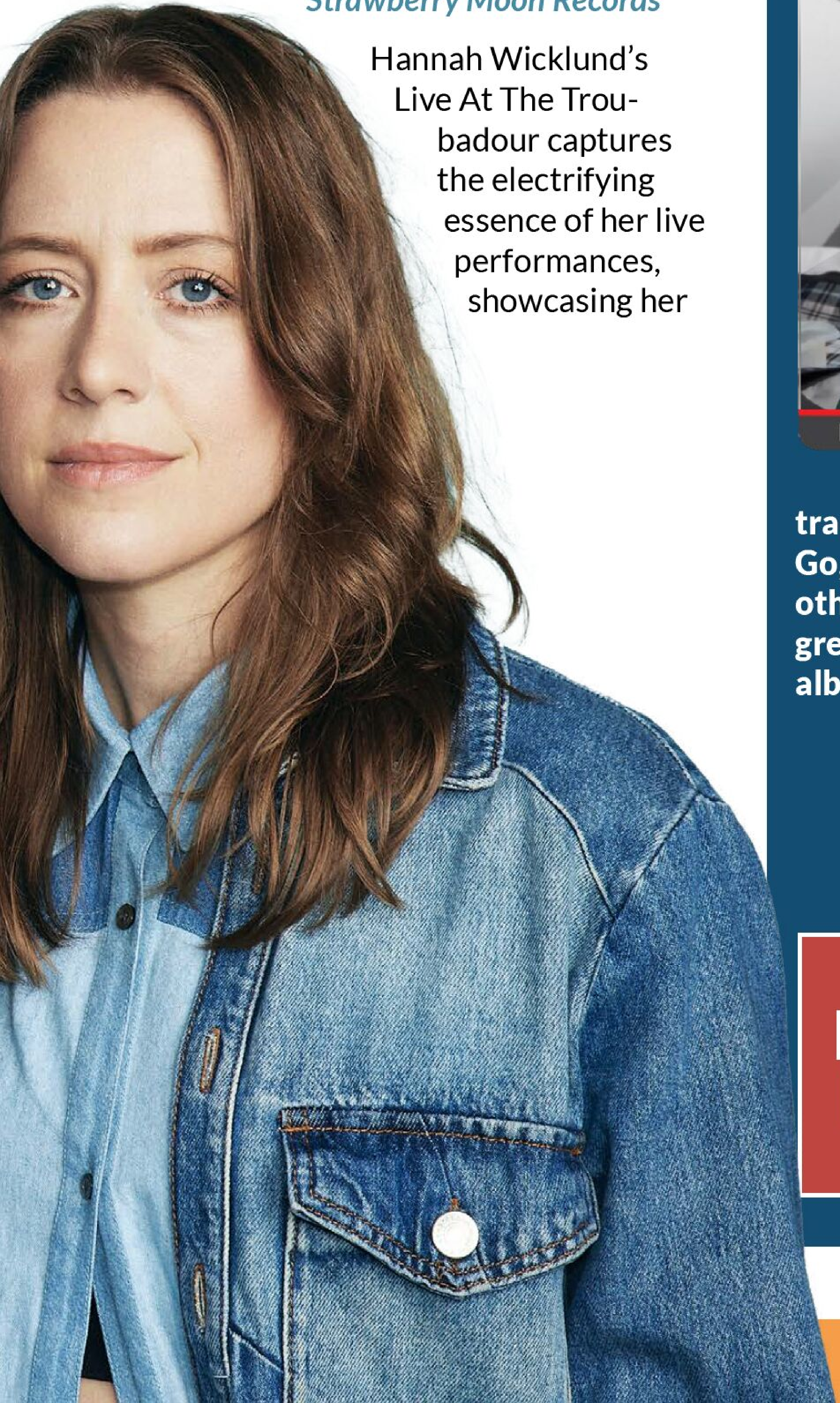
**STEPHEN HARRISON**

LISTEN, WATCH AND DISCOVER MORE AT THESE ARTIST LINKS

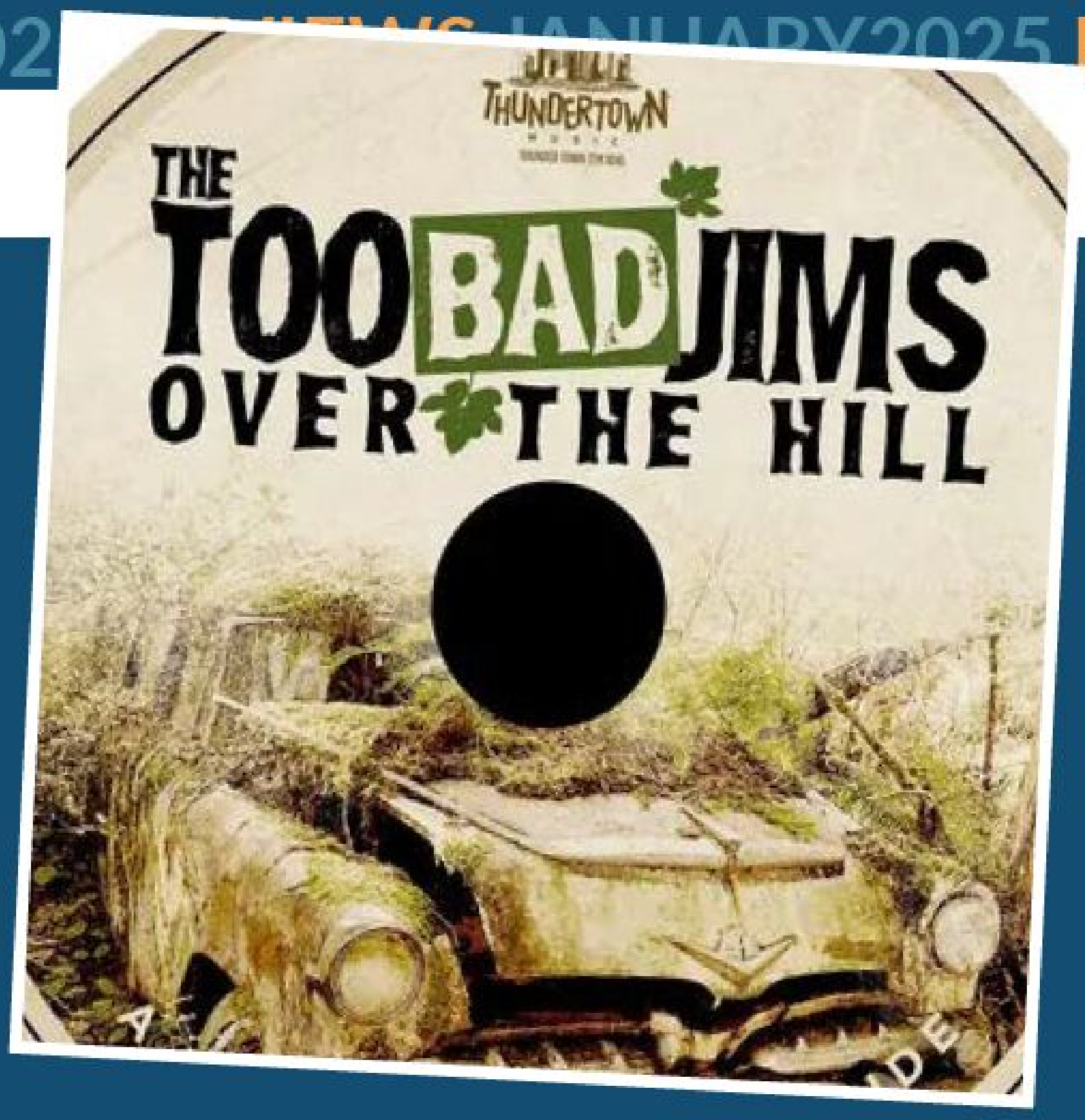
# HANNAH WICKLUND

## LIVE AT THE TRUBADOUR

*Strawberry Moon Records*



Hannah Wicklund's Live At The Troubadour captures the electrifying essence of her live performances, showcasing her



# THE TOO BAD JIMS

## OVER THE HILL

*Independent*

**The Too Bad Jims are a remarkable three-piece band featuring Little Victor (guitar and vocals), Son Jack Jr. (guitar and vocals), and Nick Simonen (drums). Each member boasts an impressive musical pedigree, having played alongside legends like Hubert Sumlin, Charlie Musselwhite, and Chuck Berry. Their shared love and admiration for R.L. Burnside brought them together for the first time to create this album, *Over The Hill*. This record is a heartfelt tribute to the Mississippi blues icon, comprising ten tracks penned by Burnside himself. The selection spans the spectrum of his work, from well-known classics to lesser-known gems, offering a genuine and deeply rooted homage to the sound and spirit of Mississippi blues—a style that was in Burnside's very DNA. The album kicks off with *Miss Maybelle*, a gritty, unvarnished track that drips with the essence of the Deep South. This sets the tone for the entire album, which is refreshingly raw and authentic. The songs are short and direct, recorded live in the studio without the frills of overdubs or overproduction. It's just three passionate musicians creating a sound that feels honest and true to the roots of the blues. For me, albums recorded in this stripped-down, live fashion hold a special place. They represent the real essence of blues music, unfiltered and immediate. A particular highlight is *Black Mattie*, a track I'd nearly forgotten about until spotting it on the album cover. Hearing it again was a delight, and that's part of the magic of *Over The Hill*. It's not just an album; it's a journey back in time, a history lesson that rekindles appreciation for Burnside's artistry. The closing track, *Skinny Woman*, provides a fitting end to this nostalgic trip, leaving listeners with a renewed sense of just how brilliant R.L. Burnside was as both a writer and performer. *Over The Hill* is a lovingly crafted tribute and a much-needed reminder of why Burnside's music remains so beloved. This album is an essential listen for blues enthusiasts and a testament to the enduring power of Mississippi blues.**

> *a much loved, and needed reminiscence*

**STEPHEN HARRISON**

**LISTEN, WATCH AND DISCOVER MORE AT THESE ARTIST LINKS**

growth as a musician and artist. Recorded during her first headlining show at the iconic Los Angeles venue, the album is a celebration of raw energy, intricate guitar work, and the emotive storytelling that defines her artistry, as witnessed on the opener, Hell In The Highway, with a rhythm section rocking the room from the first note. The release, features highlights like Bomb Through The Breeze, which blends jam-session spontaneity with rock grit and a crisp sound very clear, and Mama Said, a track that fuses soulful vocals with poignant lyrics. Tracks like The Prize and Shadowboxes and Porcelain Faces exhibit her ability to intertwine introspective themes with powerhouse instrumentation. Her guitar work remains a standout, delivering fiery solos and rich tonal depth that resonate with her rock and blues roots. More than a live album, this release, feels like a reflection of Wicklund's personal journey, marked by resilience, self-discovery, and her passion for live performance. It's an invitation into the soul of an artist who thrives on the energy exchanged between performer and audience, the bond of live music is right here. The production captures the intimacy and intensity of the night, emphasising Wicklund's connection to her craft and fans. Whether you're a longtime admirer or new to her music, this fantastic live release, serves as an engaging entry point to Wicklund's world of rock 'n' roll with a heart of gold.

***COLIN CAMPBELL***

# JOHN BRENNAN

## ONE WAY RIDE

*Independent*

This newest release is only the second multi-tune release in John's recording career. It kicks off with the original, Nothing to Lose, a medium-tempo blues that opens with driving, repetitive six-string hook before Brennan launches into lyrics that recount being abandoned by his lady. His slide playing is rhythmic with accents that accentuate his misery before a tasty break mid-number. His timing is solid, something he also exhibits in his rhythm playing, which is rock-steady. The mood changes immediately for an up-tempo take on Elmore James,' Shake Your Money Maker. While it's delivered with a standard arrangement, John's highly capable attack would have made the creator smile, and his drumbeat powers throughout. It gives way to the title track, One Way Ride. Once again, Brennan finds himself driving alone after another breakup. It's delivered at a super-speedy pace. Unlike the previous songs, there's a little disconnect between vocals and instrumentation that dissipates as the number progresses. Delivered as traditional blues, the Robert Johnson warhorse, Ramblin' on My Mind, follows. John holds his own on lead. This is a song done so many times by so many people that it's almost impossible to add anything fresh. The rhythm lacks punch, and the vocals though well delivered are lacking in that emotional feeling, still a good interpretation, nonetheless. Fortunately, that's forgotten from the opening measure of the up-tempo rocker, Where'd You Stay Last Night? a true pleaser, driven with a heavy beat and guitar line to match, it deals with relationship problems.

***COLIN CAMPBELL***

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# DUSTIN DOUGLAS AND THE GENTLEMEN

## BLACK LEATHER BLUES

*MoMojo Records*

From the second the opening riff of Black Leather Blues hits, it's clear that Dustin Douglas and The Gentlemen mean business. This powerhouse trio has given way to an album reeking of swagger, grit, and a raw, electrifying energy hailing back to classic blues-rock. With a sound drawing from the wellspring of Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and Led Zeppelin, Black Leather Blues is all about a statement of intent. The title track, "Black Leather Blues," immediately sets the tone with its heavy groove, blistering guitar, and Douglas's husky, soul-soaked vocals. It's oozing attitude, toeing that fine line that's just as much about blues authenticity as it is about rock rebellion. Meanwhile, "Broken" is a ballad that brings the tempo right down, where heartfelt lyrics match an emotive, high-flying solo that cuts like a knife. The production on this record sounds raw and live, too, which further adds to its undeniable charm. It's locked in tight all over by the rhythm section, with Tommy Smallcomb providing a firm backbone against which Douglas can let rip with his guitar and voice. Out of My Mind and Messin' with the Kid are just a couple of tracks that bear this

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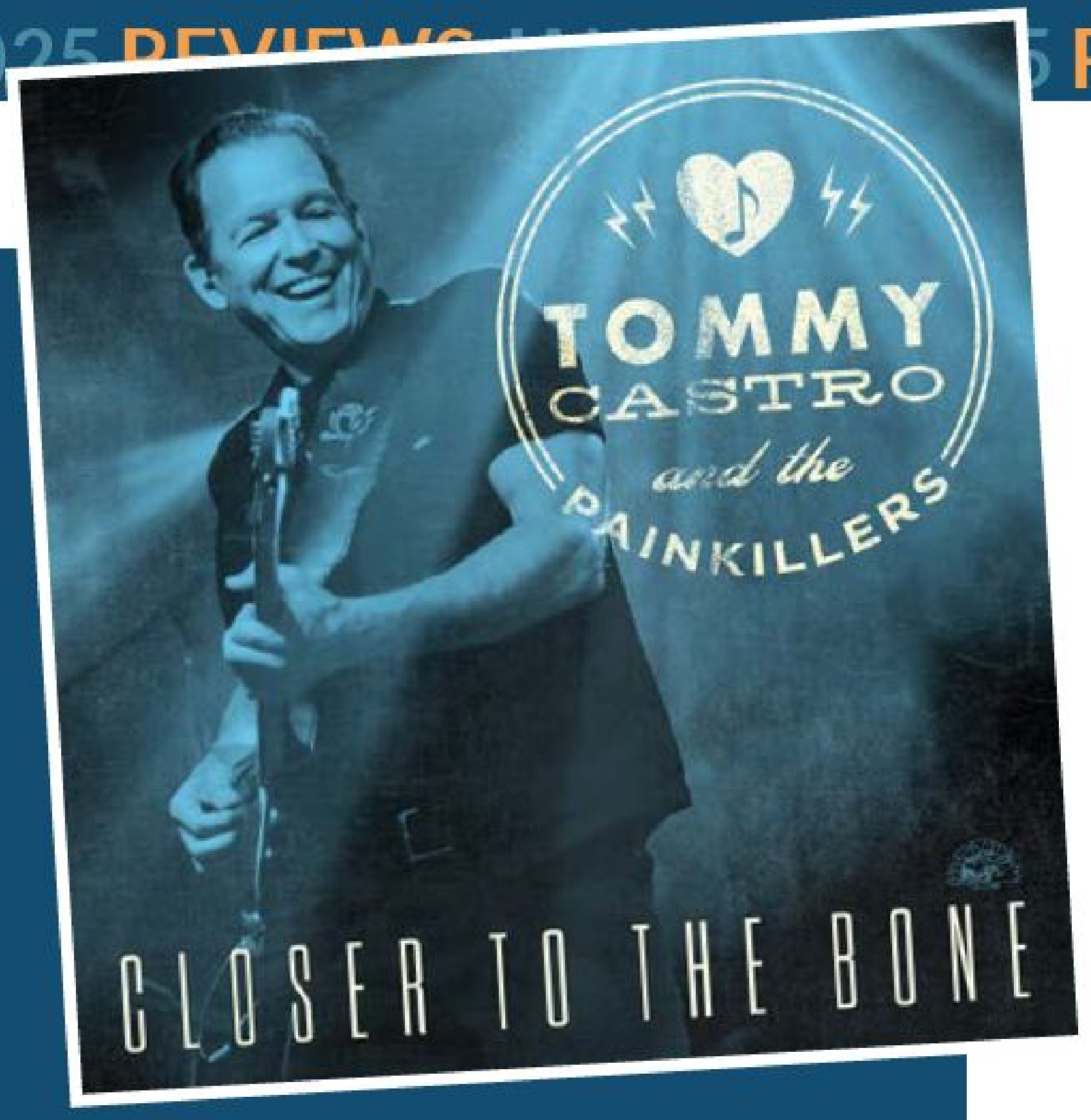
# TOMMY CASTRO AND THE PAINKILLERS



## CLOSER TO THE BONE

*Alligator Records*

**Closer To The Bone is the 8th album that Tommy Castro has recorded on the Alligator label. Reading the liner notes that accompanied the album, Castro says he wanted to make a 1005 Blues album. Well, I'm here to tell you, that he has done exactly that. Surrounding himself with a hoard of top-class musicians, Tommy Castro has also delved into the Blues archives to treat us to some forgotten Blues tunes, along with a few new numbers. Songs by, Eddie Taylor, Majic Slim, Johnny "Guitar" Watson, and Winonie Harris grace this album, reminding us that there are some hidden gems around. I Can't Catch A Break opens the album with Castro on lead vocals making sure that we all know that this is a true Blues album. Castro has been heavily influenced by the likes of, Elvin Bishop, Mike Bloomfield, and Taj Mahal, and you can hear that in his approach to the vocals, and also his guitar work. Crazy Woman Blues, co-written by Castro, is simply divine. If ever you want to feel what Blues is, just listen to this track, it oozes with tales of woe, desperation, and longing, a man pouring out his heart. The whole album is brilliant, this particular track is the icing on the cake. A Fool For You has long been a favourite song of mine since I first heard it being performed by the legendary, Ray Charles. I'm not saying that this version is better, but I will say that it runs in a very close second. A truly remarkable rendition, Charle would, I've no doubt, approve. Randy McDonald wrote and sang on the track, Everywhere I Go, Tommy Castro insisted that he should take over the vocal duties allowing us to hear what a great vocal he has. The album will be released early next year, as far as I'm concerned, it's already a contender for album of the year, 2025.**

> *it's already a contender for album of the year, 2025*

**STEPHEN HARRISON**

**LISTEN, WATCH AND DISCOVER MORE AT THESE ARTIST LINKS**

# MARC BROUSSARD

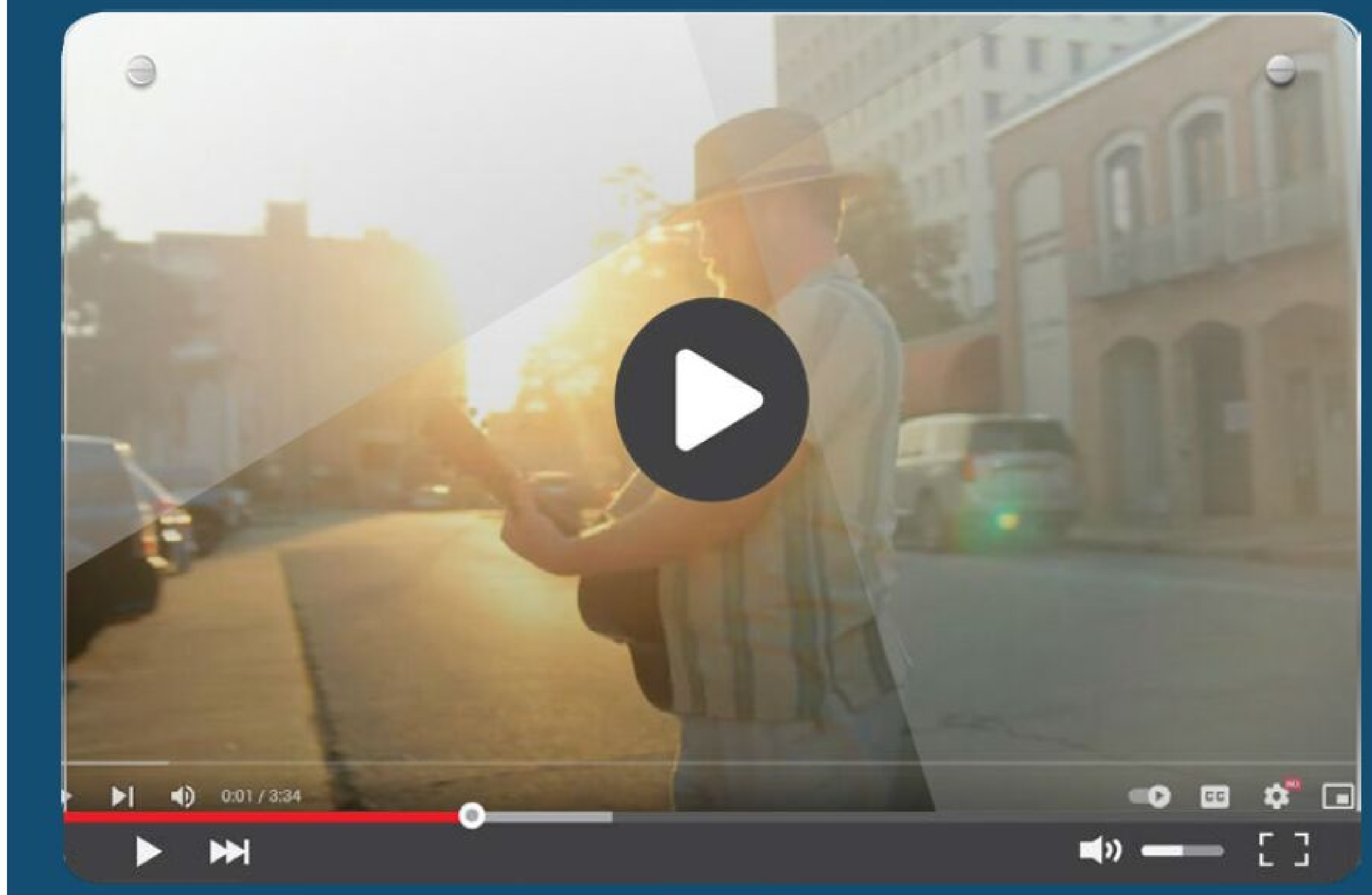
## TIME IS A THIEF

*Artist Tone Records*

marc broussard
TIME IS A THIEF

**This is the first album of original music by Marc Broussard since 2017. Ten brand-new songs from one of the finest Southern Soul singers, this album has been well worth the wait. Broussard has surrounded himself with the cream of the crop of musicians as well as producers, Eric Krasno, who also chips in on writing some of the songs, and Jeremy Most. The horn arrangements are courtesy of Daniel Casares who put the funk into funky here. The songs are so Soulful, so full of harmony and groove, Broussard has knocked this out of the park once again. Cold Blooded is one example of just how silky smooth Broussard and Krasno have developed since starting to work on this album together. Time Is A Thief is the epitome of Soul and Funk, it sometimes takes you back to the heady days of early 70s Soul that came out of Harlem, even though Marc Broussard is from the Southern side of the genre. Give You The World had me thinking about what it reminded me of, and then it dawned on me, Hall and Oates. Not that Broussard is in any way trying to copy them, he certainly doesn't need to try and imitate anyone, I think that he's such a good writer and singer, he oozes class like others have done that have gone before him. The final track, Stay Still almost made me feel rather sad, mainly because it was the end of such a marvelous album. It really is a top-drawer piece of work. One thing that I would dearly love to see, is this group of musicians going out on tour to promote this album. Now that would be one hell of a gig.**

> *It really is a top-drawer piece of work*



**STEPHEN HARRISON**

**LISTEN, WATCH AND DISCOVER MORE AT THESE ARTIST LINKS**

garage-blues intensity, while A Little Bit More tends to get really versatile and teases a bit of soulful balladry. But then again, that which distinguishes Black Leather Blues from other blues albums is a complete sense of genuineness. There's no over-polishing here—just three musicians playing their hearts out, allowing the power of the blues to be spoken for. Every riff, every lyric, and every beat seems to be a direct line to the soul of the listener. For fans of blues-rock, Black Leather Blues is a must-listen. Dustin Douglas and The Gentlemen have made an album that's both a tribute to the greats of the genre and a fresh take on its enduring appeal.

***IAN POTTER***

# JOVIN WEBB

## DRIFTER

*Blind Pig Records*

I'm ashamed to say that before the album arrived, I didn't know anything about Jovin Webb. After a little bit of wandering around this internet thing, I found that he was a finalist on American Idol, 2018. The one name that I am very familiar with on the album is Tom Hambridge. Songwriter, drummer, producer, there is literally no end to this man's talents. Tom Hambridge features as a songwriter on eleven of the twelve songs, and Jovin Webb joins him as co-writer on eight of the twelve. Hambridge brings his many years of knowledge and experience working with many Blues legends to this debut album, Webb is his protégé. The opening track, Bottom Of A Bottle gives you the first glimpse of the amazing vocal talents of Webb, he has such a powerful and captivating vocal style, that it's no surprise that he got to be a finalist on American Idol. I'm A Drifter, for me, brings out the very best in the group of musicians that are part of this album. Webb for his vocals and harmonica, Hambridge for his immaculate percussion work, Kenny Greenburg for wonderful Blues guitar, Mike Rojas on keys, and Rob Cureton on bass. Wig On Wrong is a fast-paced guitar-riff-led Blues tune that makes you want to shake what your momma gave you, no matter who is watching, such a feel-good song, full of fun and frolics. Blues For A Reason for me, sums up the whole album. This is what Jovin Webb was born to do, it doesn't matter which path he took to get here, he's here, and he's here to stay. The future of the Blues is in very capable hands, there is a new sheriff in town, his name is Jovin Webb.

***STEPHEN HARRISON***

## LOUIS CROSLAND

### QUARTER CENTURY SOUL

*Independent*

Edinburgh-based singer-songwriter Louis Crosland is making waves with his debut E.P. A tapestry of musical styles, this is a masterclass in heartfelt storytelling and raw musicianship. Crosland's smoky, soulful vocals and intricate guitar work weave a poignant narrative, diving deep into themes of mental health, relationships, and the ever-persistent march of time. Recorded at Edinburgh's renowned Post Electric Studio and produced by Rod Jones of Idlewild, his ability to marry classic influences with a distinctly modern sensibility on these four well-crafted tracks is masterful. Crosland's musical journey began at 18 when he formed Bourbon Street 5, quickly earning acclaim as they opened for blues powerhouses like Eric Gales. Now, as a solo artist, he brings a fresh perspective to the blues and soul genres, delivering music that resonates with authenticity and emotional depth. Give Me Sunshine starts with strings then piano, and the band are a solid unit driving rhythm but it's the vocal delivery full of feeling that makes this a standout. I Blame The Time has a laid-back soulfulness of its own, great musicianship. Key To My Heart is an upbeat tune, a bittersweet love song. It All Leads Back to You, has soul-baring lyrics and stirring guitar melodies. It's a perfect introduction to Crosland's ability to translate personal experiences into universal truths, leaving listeners both moved and mesmerized. For fans of timeless storytelling and genre-blending soundscapes, this release signals the arrival of a bold new voice in the UK music scene—one that promises to leave a lasting impact.

***COLIN CAMPBELL***

## MIKE BLOOMFIELD

### IT'S NOT KILLING ME

### LIVE AT THE OLD WALDORF

*Floating World Records*

This is a double album release that features the first solo album by Mike Bloomfiled, It's Not Killing me, first released in 1969. The second album a culmination of live recordings taken between the years 1974-1977. The live album was recorded mostly at The Old Waldorf in San Fransisco. Mike Bloomfield had been a nintegral parft of the Chicago Blues scene for many years, playing with The Paul Butterfield Band among others. Around that time, the likes of Elvin Bishop, Butterfield and Nick Gravenites were all making names for themselves, both collectively and individually. Bloomfield recorded his first solo album, and the world got to know just how good this guy was. The songs range from raw Blues, Country Blues, and what could be described as the first dip of the toe into the Americana waters. One of the great things about this double release is that it reminds you of songs that you may have forgotten, songs such as, Far Too Many Nights. This has been one of my favouite Mike Bloomfiled tunes, one of those that gets stuck in the back of your mind, then when you hear it again, it all comes flooding back as to how good this album was, and still is. Ten out of the eleven tracks were written by Bloomfield, with the exception of, Next Time You See Me. A wonderful trip down memory lane that had me so excited to hear the live album. Live At The Old Waldorf, has to be considered as one of the finest live Blues albums. It brings together Bloomfield and his Blues counterpart, Nick Gravenites, two of the finest Chicago Blues players in my opinion. Greavenites takes the lead vocals on many of the tunes, and plays rhythm guitar allowing Bloomfiled to play lead guitar like a man possessed. A stunning version of, The Sky Is Cryin' one of the best versions I've heard in a long time, reinforces the belief that these guys were as good as anyone on the planet during the late 60s and early 70s. A trip down memory lane, yes indeed, both albums highlighting Mike Bloomfield as one of the most creative Blues artists of his generation.

***STEPHEN HARRISON.***

## PARCHMAN PRISON PRAYER

### ANOTHER MISSISSIPPI SUNDAY MORNING

*Glitterbeat Records*

A couple of years ago, I had the privilege of reviewing the very first collection of songs from The Parchman Prison Choir and inmates. You could be forgiven for thinking, what in the hell is he reviewing an album of songs performed by convicted felons for? Let me explain, Parchman Prison has something in place for inmates instead of just penal servitude, they believe that prisoners, in this case men, can also benefit from trying to redeem themselves through song, and if needed, faith. The inmates who perform these songs range in age between 23-74, which gives a good indicator of how each felon is thinking along the road to redemption. Each performer has different tales to tell, different emotions, and different feelings of faith. Grace Will Lead Me On, is a song and a tale by M. Palmer, aged 61, who tells the story of his first encounter of hearing the song, Amazing Grace with his father. As a child, he didn't understand what the song was all about, through tears, his father explained to him about faith, and believing in something godly, that will always be with you. He asked his mother and grandmother the same question, and received the same answer. This is not people preaching to you, this is people explaining their innermost thoughts, through Gospel music. Just because they have committed a crime, of which we know nothing, doesn't mean that they do not want to repent. They are telling their own stories and struggles through song, which is where Gospel and Blues started. I Shall Not Want, ragails a story along the lines of The Lord Is My Shepherd, M.Kyles, aged 54, reaffirming his faith that no matter what happens, his life will eventually turn around for the better. Many of the tunes are performed acapello, which for me, adds to the enjoyment of the songs. The album is uplifting, spiritually, and mentally, the prisoners have stories to tell, in their own unique way, they tell them through the power of song, Blues and Gospel. To me, this is something good that has come out of the penal system. Let he who is without sin...

***STEPHEN HARRISON***

## RENE TROSSMAN

### FALL FROM GRACE

*Independent*

Rene Trossman originates from Chicago where he was raised on Chicago Blues from an early age. He spent time on the South Side of the Windy City, playing in bars and clubs, soaking up the atmosphere, and studying the likes of, Magic Sam, Muddy Waters, and Junior Wells. Rene now lives in Prague, and this album was recorded there, some of the songs were recorded during a live performance in the city. Six of the nine songs were written by Rene Trossman, who also takes vocal and guitar duties. The album opens with a live recording of the title track, Fall From Grace, packing some great horns alongside the Jazz/Blues accompaniment of the rest of the band. That's what the album contains in the main, Jazz and Blues, very expertly combined, and as I said, having great horns in the mix certainly helps to fuse the two genres. Another Shooter is a different kind of tune, it still has Blues running through it, but the lyrics are dark, and unfortunately all too true about today's society. It tackles the needles and disturbing events surrounding gun crime which affects many communities worldwide. A sombre message, but brilliantly done. Jimmy, Eddie, and Earl is an instrumental with the piano taking the lead part of the song, laid-back, leaning more towards Jazz than Blues. This is my first encounter with Rene Trossman, I'll make sure that it is not the last. Chicago's loss is Prague's gain. Loved it.

***STEPHEN HARRISON***

## ROBBEN FORD AND THE BLUE LINE

### LIVE AT MONTREUX JAZZ FESTIVAL 1993

*Repertoire Records*

This release combines a CD and DVD of the gig in 1993. Montreux Jazz Festival has featured some of the best Blues bands and artists for many years. Robben Ford has been called the musician's musician, and if you have delved into his vast back catalogue, you will understand why. He's appearing here with his band, The Blue Line performing some of his own brilliant material, alongside Blues classics such as the opening tune, I Don't Play, originally written by Willie Dixon. For some reason, Robben Gord doesn't get the recognition that he truly deserves, by fellow Muso's yes, but by the general Blues population, he's not always on the tip of everyone's tongue. During this set, as I've alluded to, he plays Blues classics Politician, written by Pete Brown, and features on the 1968 album Wheels Of Fire by Cream. Worried Life Blues, by Maceo Merriweather, has long been a stalwart of my Blues collection, and it has been covered by so many Blues artists, Eric Clapton, The Rolling Stones, Chuck Berry, and I could go on and on. This particular version gave me goosebumps, Ford shredding his guitar and wailing like a banshee, making it a highlight of this live set. You Cut Me To The Bone, Busted, and Mama Talk To Your Daughter see Robben Ford performing his own material, each one a musical gem, the band

Dominic Gouin

LISTEN TO THE BLUES MATTERS

PODCAST

Listen to some amazing interviews with the artists we've been lucky enough to speak to for the magazine. NOW ON YOUTUBE!

SAMANTHA FISH
In this exciting episode, Adam Kennedy sits down with blues sensation Samantha Fish, known for her electrifying guitar skills, powerful vocals, and genre-defying sound.

STEVE HILL
Adam Kennedy sits down with the immensely talented musician Steve Hill. Known for his electrifying performances and raw, authentic sound

TERRY MARSHALL
In this episode, Steve Harrison sits down with Terry Marshall, founder of Marshall Records, to discuss the release of his highly anticipated new album.

extending the original versions because it's a live set, allowing everyone to shine and take the songs to a different place. Live At Montreux Jazz Festival 1993, is a masterpiece of Blues excellence. Get your hands on a copy, and see just how talented Robben Ford is.

***STEPHEN HARRISON***

# SONNY GULLAGE

## GO BE FREE

*Blind Pig Records*

Blind Pig Records have recently introduced two very fine Blues artists to me. Jovin Webb, and now, Sonny Gullage. As with the Jovin Webb album, Tom Hambridge has been heavily involved with Go Be Free, as a musician, writer, and producer. Hambridge is, at this moment in time, the go-to guy where Blues albums are concerned. Another huge bonus for me, when this album dropped through my letterbox, was seeing that Christone "Kingfish" Ingram was also guesting as guitarist on one of the songs. What's not to like about this album, even before I've started to listen to it? Just Kiss Me Baby opens the proceedings, showing that the co-writing skills of messers Hambridge and Gullage help to make this album as good as it is. But, it's not only the writing between these two guys that makes this album very enjoyable, the rest of the musicians gathered together for the recording all play their respective parts very well indeed. Kevin McKendree on keyboards and piano plays such a pivotal role on the record, from soft Blues to Boogie-Woogie style piano, driving the songs forward and allowing Gullage to focus solely on his vocal duties, which he does extremely well by the way. Sonny Gullage delivers each song meticulously, be it a raunch Blues number, a ballad, or, in fact, a Blues/Rocker type tune. Worried About The Young, sees " Kingfish join the fray on guitar, I swear that he gets better each and every time that I hear him. For me, "Kingfish is the best Blues guitarist around at the moment, so to put him with this amazing bunch of musicians was a masterstroke. Blues All Over You, pretty much describes what the song is about in the title. This is the way Blues should be played, and sung, with feeling and emotion, and some trepidation in the vocals. I've thoroughly enjoyed every song on this album, everyone connected with it should be very proud of what they have produced. I predict big things in the future for Sonny Gullage. Congratulations Blind Pig Records.

***STEPHEN HARRISON***

# THE SWAPS

## LIVE AT UPTON BLUES FESTIVAL

*Independent*

The Upton Blues Festival first graced the beautiful landscape of Worcestershire in 2001. It has drawn many great bands and artists over the years, making it one of the most successful Festivals in the UK. In 2024, The Swaps brought their own unique Roots/Blues music and thankfully, they had the presence of mind to record their set for this live album. The Swaps are Beth Brooks, Vocals, Adam  Phillips, Guitar, and James Knight, Guitar and Vocals. They are based in Leamington Spar, which is not exactly a million miles away from Upton. All eight songs on the album were written by the band and highlight the band's influences. The opening track kind of threw me for a second because when a band opens a set at a festival, it's usually a grab-you-by-the-throat type of song. This album is very different from the norm, and I find that very appealing. Wolf is the opening song, a very mellow, laid-back tune, but one that shows the incredible talent that this band has in spades. Each song takes you down the Folk/Blues trail, and a very welcome trail it is, Beth Brooks sounds silkier and smoother with each vocal performance and harmonizes so well with James Knight. As this is an acoustic album, I must say that the guitar playing by James Knight and Adam Phillips is awe-inspiring. Negativity leans slightly more towards the Blues side of the scale, guitar picking, and acoustic music at its very best. Listening to this album has made me feel so relaxed, and so appreciative of Roots, Folk, and Acoustic Blues. There will be a new studio album released in 2025, Personally, I can't wait to get my hands on a copy.

***STEPHEN HARRISON***

# THE TWANGTOWN PARAMOURS

## THE WIND WILL CHANGE

*Inside Edge Records*

This is the fourth release by The Twangtown Paramours featuring Marybeth Zamer and Mike T Lewis, and it is their first Folk album for over a decade. Now, I have to admit that this is the first time the band, or Marybeth and Mike have come to my attention, so I deferred to the internet thingy and did a bit of research. It turns out that Maybeth had worked with and provided backing vocals for the great Eva Cassidy. This gives you some indication of her talent and indeed her vocal range. So, to the album, A Room In Bordeaux, is a Folk/Americana tune, as are all of the tracks, but what I found was that the title, lyrics, and musical arrangement, actually made me feel that I was in Bordeaux. I know that this this not exactly splitting the atom, but I feel that it is a sign of great writing to put the listener exactly where the song wants them to be. Eleven of the thirteen songs on the album are acoustic tunes, now this will come as no surprise, but they are all so well delivered, some are laid-back, and some have a more upbeat sound, but each song is meticulously written and performed. As I mentioned earlier, Maybeth Zamer had previously worked with Eva Cassidy, listen to this album and you will not be the least surprised as to why. Part Of Me for some inexplicable reason resonated with me on a deeper level. The mood was different from the other tunes, slightly darker, and more melancholy, but a great tune, my standout track on the album.

***STEPHEN HARRISON***

# MUIREANN BRADLEY

## I KEPT THE BLUES

*Independent*

It's not very often that you find an artist right at the beginning of their recording career, but, in the case of Muireann Bradley, that is exactly what we have done. Born in 2006, Muireann Bradley has produced an album of Country Blues that upon hearing it, you would swear that it had been recorded by someone with many more miles on the clock. That is not to say that she sounds dated, far from it, it means that she has a level of greatness despite being so young. Hailing from Balleybofey, County Donegal, Muireann has the sweet delicate vocals that you might expect, but the heart and passion of a girl raised in The Deep South of America, the spiritual home of Country Blues. Candyman endorses the fact that I earlier attested to, the sound of County Donegal in the vocals, the presence of Mississippi in her performance. Something else that sprung to mind was the fact that her finger-picking style on the acoustic guitar is quite reminiscent of artists like Memphis Minnie, and Bessie Smith. There are some great covers on the album, Stag O Lee being one of them. Now this is a song about the murder of Billy Lyons by Stag “ Lee” Shelton in St. Louis. This particular tune has been covered by many artists in many different guises, the first recording by Fred Warring’s Pennsylvanians. It reached the top of the Billboard 100 in 19059 courtesy of Lloyd Price. We are dealing with the cream of Country Blues on this album, the only thing separating original Country Blues songs, and this album is the fact that you can’t hear any scratches on a 78 rpm. The album concludes with a stunning version of, When The Levee Breaks, which needs no introduction or explanation. If you want a history lesson on authentic Country Blues, get to know Muireann Bradley, and get a copy of this fine album.

***STEPHEN HARRISON***

## FABRIZIO POGGI

### HEALING BLUES

*Appaloosa*

Following the success of his Basement Blues release, Fabrizio Poggi’s newest collection serves as both a continuation and an evolution of his deeply personal exploration of the blues. This disc delves into Poggi’s rich archives, blending previously recorded live and studio material with new tracks crafted specifically for this release. The result is a cohesive yet dynamic collection that feels both timeless and immediate. Rooted in the Delta tradition yet brimming with modern relevance, these ten tracks highlight Poggi’s mastery of the blues harp while weaving a heartfelt narrative of resilience and renewal. From the first haunting wails of his harmonica on the opening track, I Want Jesus To Walk With Me, Poggi sets the tone for a deeply evocative journey, beautiful vocal delivery from Shar White. Tracks like Pilgrim, and Song For Angelina with Guy Davis, resonate with raw emotion, featuring understated yet powerful arrangements that allow Poggi’s melodic storytelling to shine. His harmonica alternately cries, whispers, and roars, embodying the essence of the blues as a channel for human pain and triumph. Notable collaborations elevate this release to a new level. Poggi’s duet with Enrico Polverari on guitar is a bluesy highlight, blending raw instrumentation to this track. Also, the version of Amazing Grace with Shar White is divine. The live version with Guy Davis of Sonny And Brownie’s Last Train is delightful and atmospheric whilst he adds his own lyrics to the Little Milton tune, The Blues Is Alright. What makes this release truly special is its sincerity.

***COLIN CAMPBELL***

## THORBJORN RISAGER & THE BLACK TORNADO

### HOUSE OF STICKS

*Provogue Records*

With their new release, Thorbjørn Risager & The Black Tornado have once again cemented their reputation as modern blues powerhouses, effortlessly blending tradition and innovation. The Danish ensemble’s latest effort is a gritty, soul-stirring journey that showcases their ability to push the blues into contemporary territory without losing its roots. The opener, a swampy, ethereal groove-laden number that sets the tone for what’s to come. Risager’s voice, a rich and smoky baritone that sounds like it’s been aged in oak barrels, is the undeniable centrepiece. His vocal delivery is both commanding and intimate, making even the most familiar blues tropes feel personal and urgent. The Black Tornado are a force to be reckoned with. Their arrangements are tight yet dynamic, with horns, keys, and guitar working in harmony to create a lush, layered soundscape. Tracks like, Already Gone and Out Of The Rain, boast infectious hooks and electrifying solos, while melancholic tunes like, Light Of Your Love and Said I Was Hurt bring tender, introspective moments. Mood and texture of songs seem the key to this amazing opus, Climbed A Mountain having so many layers to this eclectic tune. Long Time Ago is peppered with electronic tones, then the band lets rip, a very catchy number and atmospheric, full of different tones and style. The last tune, Fine Summer Night is a laid-back tune with a country feel, a ballad of sorts. This band are not afraid to flirt with rock, funk, or even a touch of jazz, making this more than just a straight blues album; it’s a genre-crossing tour de force.

***COLIN CAMPBELL***

## DUKE ROBILLARD

### ROLL WITH ME

*STONY PLAIN*

Legendary blues guitarist Duke Robillard delivers a masterful blend of tradition and innovation with Roll with Me, an album that showcases his unparalleled talent and deep connection to the blues. This collection of songs captures the essence of his artistry, blending heartfelt vocals, exceptional guitar work, and dynamic arrangements that keep listeners hooked from start to finish. The opening track, Don’t Bother Trying to Steal Her Love, sets the tone with its smooth groove and intricate guitar licks. Robillard’s ability to infuse emotion into every note is apparent throughout the album, whether he’s delivering a soulful vocal performance or a blistering guitar solo. His unique touch elevates each song, making even the simplest arrangements feel rich and full of character. What makes Roll with Me stand out is its versatility. Robillard explores various shades of blues, from the swinging rhythms of He Was There to the raw, rocking energy of Shufflin’ and Rollin’. The album also ventures into jazz-tinged territory with tracks like Cry Me a River Blues, where horn arrangements add depth and texture to the sound. Despite this diversity, the album remains cohesive, tied together by Robillard’s unmistakable style. Robillard’s band deserves equal praise, providing a rock-solid foundation that allows his guitar and vocals to shine. The chemistry among the musicians is palpable, giving the album a live, organic feel that’s increasingly rare in today’s polished recordings. Every track feels like a collaboration between seasoned artists who truly understand the heart of the blues. With Roll with Me, Duke Robillard reaffirms his status as one of the finest blues artists of his generation. The album is a celebration of the genre’s past, present, and future, delivered by a musician whose passion and skill continue to inspire. Whether you’re a longtime fan or new to Robillard’s music, this album is a must-listen.

***IAN POTTER***

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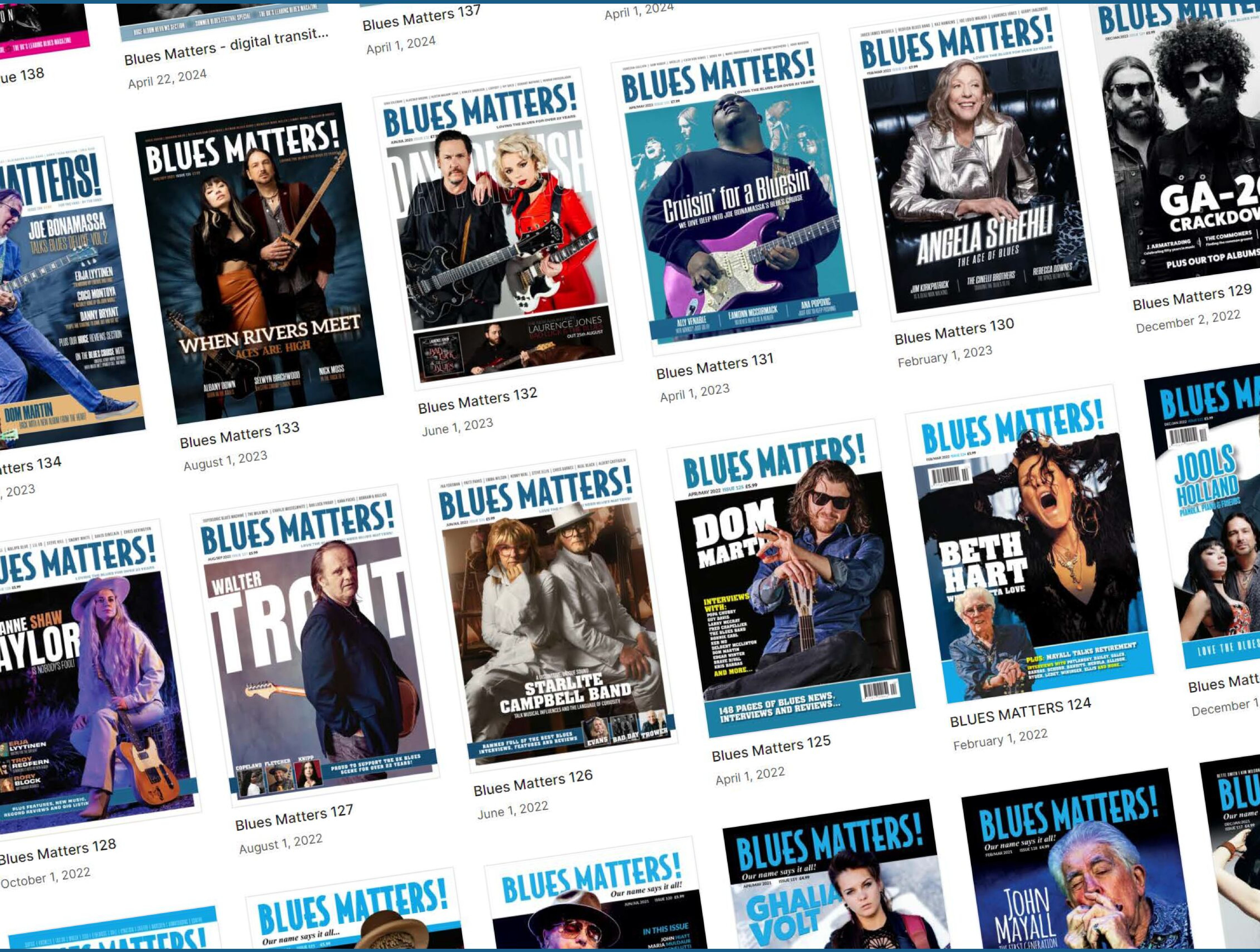

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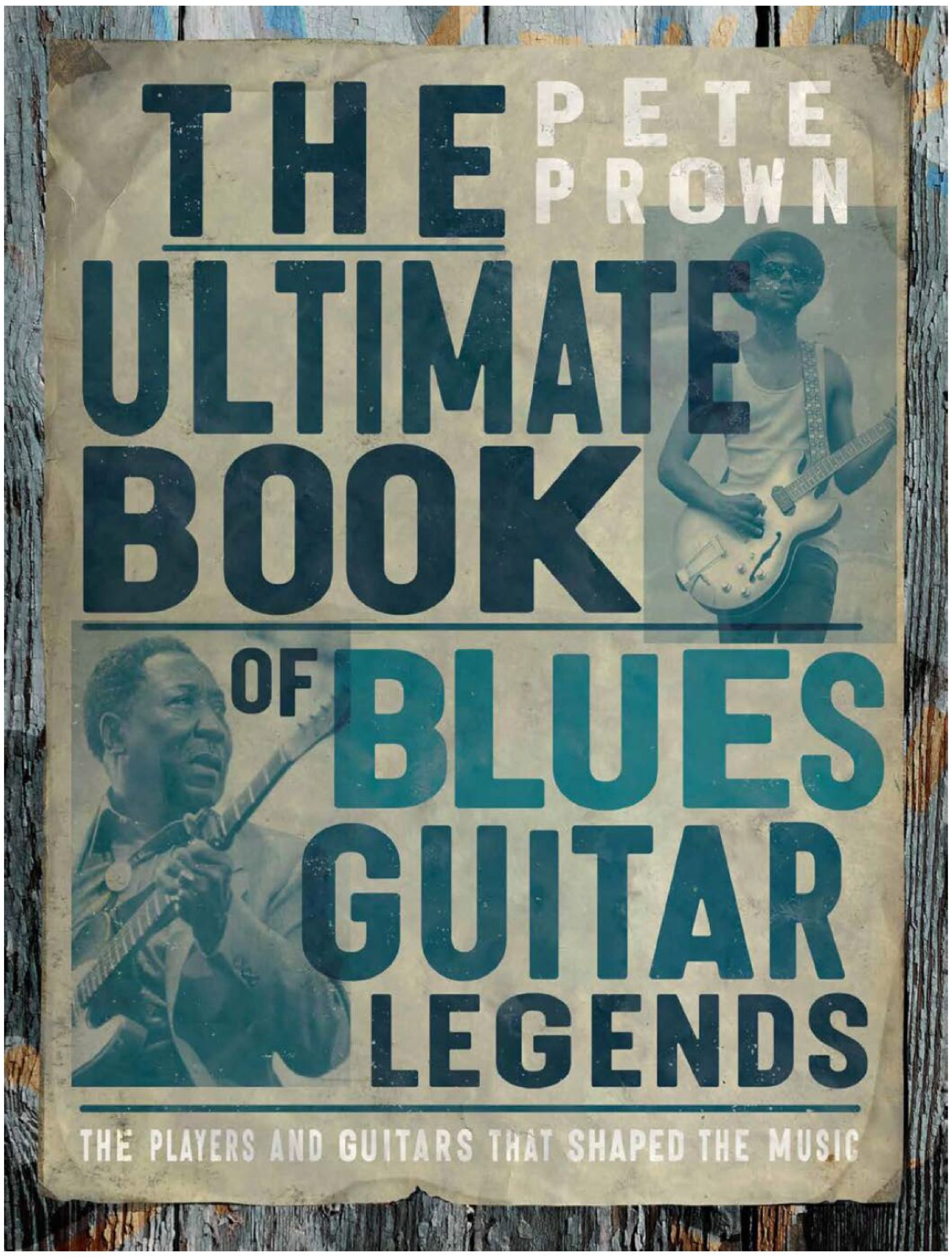
# BOOK REVIEW

## THE ULTIMATE BOOK OF BLUES GUITAR LEGENDS BY PETE PROWN

*Quarto Publishing*

This is simply a wonderful bit of detailed work from US writer, Pete Prown. In depth coverage of the pickers who shaped the music and their instruments of choice, the large-format book includes coverage of over 150 of blues music's greatest guitarists. Seminal influences like Muddy, BB King and more modern greats from Joe Bonamassa, Gary ClarkeJr and Sam Fish all get full detailed cover while a chronological approach digs deeply into the old acoustic guys from the Delta and the trail to Chicago where electric blues was born. Sections feature the original unplugged acoustic greats like Robert Johnson and Son House; the Chicago explosion with Muddy, Howlin' Wolf and Jimmy Reed. The growth of Rock-Blues is neatly discussed followed by Country Blues and the British attack on the States,, Each part features wonderful photographic examples and a consideration described as 'Key Players.' Pretty much everyone of note is included here yogether with their personal choice of guitars, ending with a look at 'Young Guns' with Kingfish among others. A wonderful, assured publication, this is an absolute gem, a true blues treasure of immense interest to most blues lovers.

***IAIN PATIENCE***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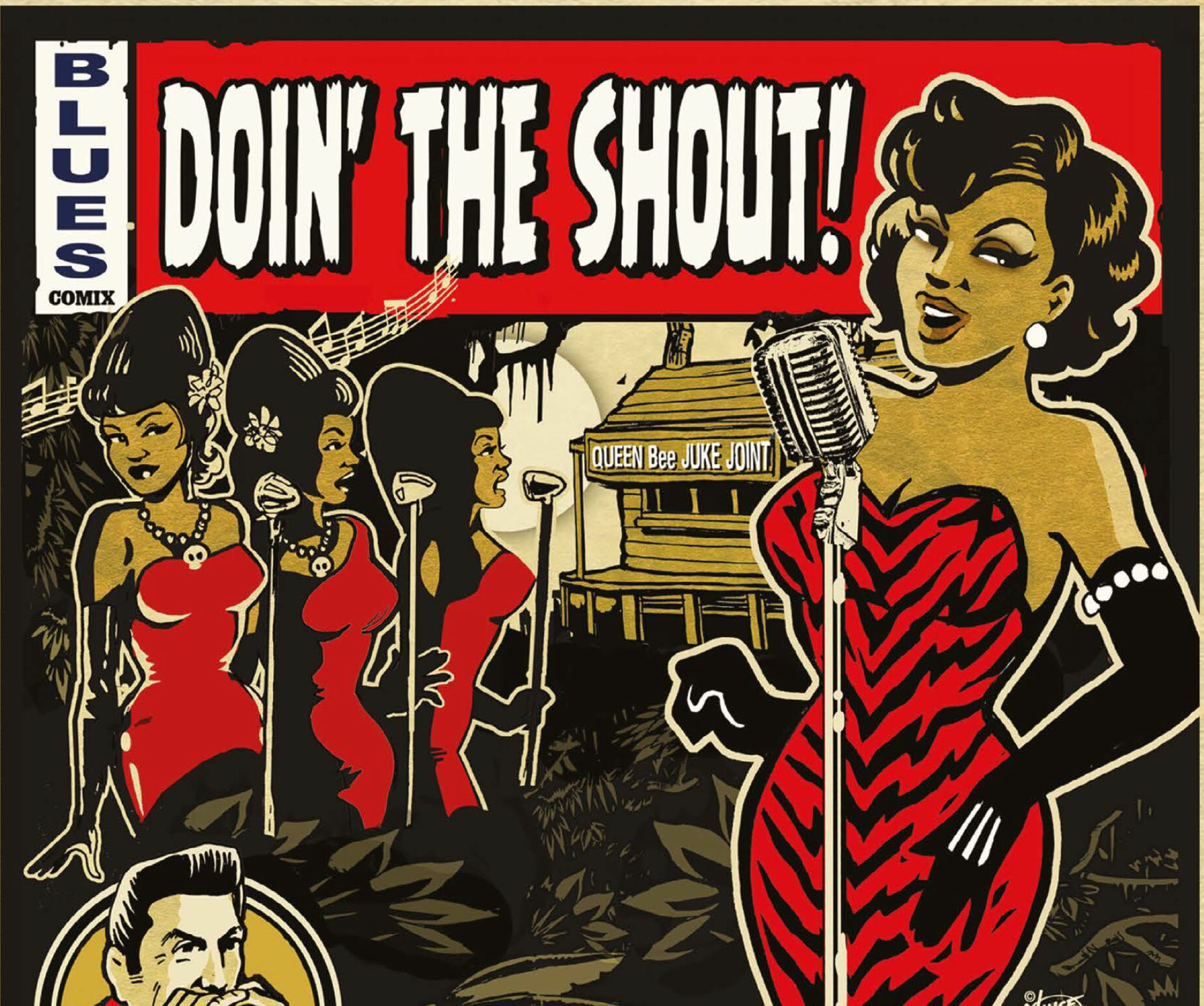
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# IBBA TOP 40

**INDEPENDENT BLUES BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION**

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| Position | Artist | Album |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | MISSISSIPPI MACDONALD | I GOT WHAT YOU NEED |
| 2 | EVA CARBONI | BLUES SIREN |
| 3 | THE HITMAN BLUES BAND | CALLING LONG DISTANCE |
| 4 | THE BLUESBONES | LIVE ON TOUR |
| 5 | BETH HART | YOU STILL GOT ME |
| 6 | DOM MARTIN | BURIED ALIVE |
| 7 | IAN SIEGAL MEETS JOHNNY MASTRO | EASY TIGER |
| 8 | WARREN HAYNES | MILLION VOICES WHISPER |
| 9 | LIZ JONES & BROKEN WINDOWS | DOUBLE MEASURES |
| 10 | THE TOO BAD JIMS | OVER THE HILL |
| 11 | SHEMEKIA COPELAND | BLAME IT ON EVE |
| 12 | RUTHLESS BLUES | NICE WORK |
| 13 | LEAVIN' TRUNK | THE RIVER |
| 14 | MARCUS TRUMMER | FROM THE START |
| 15 | C.W. AYON | BOUNCE BOOGIE & BUMP |
| 16 | THE TERRAPLANES BLUES BAND | LIVE AT TEMPERANCE |
| 17 | EDDIE 9V | SARATOGA |
| 18 | SISTER SUZIE & THE RIGHT BAND | HONESTLY? |
| 19 | SUNJAY | I'M JUST LIKE YOU |
| 20 | THE MAIN LINE | COBALT BLUE |
| 21 | THE 2:19 | KEEP MY WILL STRONG |
| 22 | TERRY MARSHALL & FRIENDS | LIVING THE BLUES |
| 23 | OLLEE OWENS | NOWHERE TO HIDE |
| 24 | ROBERT JON & THE WRECK | RED MOON RISING |
| 25 | GREIG TAYLOR BAND | BIG DAWG BLUES |
| 26 | BRAVE RIVAL | FIGHT OR FLIGHT |
| 27 | MICHAEL MESSER & CHAZ JANKEL | MOSTLY WE DRIVE |
| 28 | AMAURY FAIVRE | MY AMERICANA |
| 29 | KAI STRAUSS | WAILIN' IN VIENNA |
| 30 | MARK 'NESSIE' NESMITH | A SINNER’S PRAYER |
| 31 | RONNIE BAKER BROOKS | BLUES IN MY DNA |
| 32 | VANESSA COLLIER | DO IT MY OWN WAY |
| 33 | NEIL SADLER | PAST TO PRESENT |
| 34 | GILES ROBSON & JOHN PRIMER | TEN CHICAGO BLUES CLASSICS |
| 35 | THE SWAPS | THE SWAPS LIVE |
| 36 | LUCY ZIRINS | CHASING CLOCKS |
| 37 | FRIED OKRA | DELUXE LIVE |
| 38 | KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD | DIRT ON MY DIAMONDS VOL. 2 |
| 39 | JOHN BRENNAN | ONE WAY RIDE |

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# TYNESIDE AMERICANA BLUES FESTIVAL 2025

WEEKEND TICKETS ONLY
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## FRIDAY JAN 10TH

**MEDICINE HEAD ● DEBORAH BONHAM BAND**

FLEETING RUMOURS ● ROBBIE REAY AND CRAN ● THERESA WATSON BLUES BAND
BIG RIVER ● PHIL CAFFREY ● GERRY JABOLONSKI

## SATURDAY JAN 11TH

**JOHN VERITY (EX-ARGENT)**
**DAVEY PATTISON BAND**

IAN MCNABB ● ASH LYNCH
THOMAS KILLNER BAND ● STAN THE BAND
ANDY FRASER & JIM BULLOCK
DR FEELGUID ● LOUNGE LIZARDS ● SLAGBANK
KING SIZE VOODOO TRAVELLER
TERRAPLANES BLUES BAND

## SUNDAY JAN 12TH

**ANIMALS & FRIENDS**
**RHINOS REVENGE** (JOHN EDWARDS & LEON CAVE OF STATUS QUO)

SENSATIONAL ALEX HARVEY EXPERIENCE
FARGO RAIL CO ● JED THOMAS BAND ● DIRTY RUBY
TEN BOB BLIND ● RUSS TIPPINS ● PABLO & THE BLUESTONES
ALLY LEE SOLO ACOUSTIC ● HOLLY ROSE CLEGG

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